



**A University of Sussex DPhil thesis**

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

# **What state are we in? Activism, professional feminists and local government**

Thesis submitted by Freya Johnson Ross for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

July 2014

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree and is entirely the result of my own work.

Freya Johnson Ross

Signature:.....

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

THESIS SUBMITTED BY FREYA JOHNSON ROSS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WHAT STATE ARE WE IN? ACTIVISM, PROFESSIONAL FEMINISTS AND  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY

This thesis examines the particular sphere of gender equality working in UK local government in relation to feminist ideas and activism. In doing so it addresses questions about the nature and legacy of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), as well as how we should understand those engaged with feminist issues but organised in apparently non-traditional ways and locations. It also considers the significance of national legislation in shaping how this area of work has developed, with reference to the most recent Equality Acts.

Taking as my starting point classic debates about organising for social change within the WLM, I undertook a qualitative comparative analysis of local government gender equality working. This examined three councils during the period in which they first created municipal feminist women's initiatives, and the present day. To do this I undertook interviews with those working during both time periods, and gathered contemporary and archival texts relating to the councils' work on gender equality.

I suggest that the council gender equality initiatives, and those working within them, present an interesting way to complicate several boundaries; those usually defining the feminist movement and its organising; social movements in relation to the state; and feminist activity in relation to professionalism. I argue for the significance of the municipal feminist initiatives for present day work on gender equality, particularly in terms of their organisational position and form. I explore the utility of, and problems with, recent legislative developments in relation to gender equality, suggesting they have played an important role in standardising the work that takes place. I also examine the processes through which the concepts and practices of local government gender equality working have developed. In doing so I argue for the non-linear way this takes place and the importance of individual workers in shaping this arena. Finally, I present the idea of the 'professional feminist' as a way to understand the workers who identify as feminists. This challenges the terms of the early WLM but does so through drawing out and reconciling professionalism with feminist ideas.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements (p8)

1. Introduction (p9)
2. From the Women's Liberation Movement to Municipal Feminism — Organisation and Activism (p15)

*Introduction* (p15)

*The Women's Liberation Movement: Social Movements, Organisation and Identities* (p16)

*The Women's Movement and the State* (p18)

*Identities Within the Women's Liberation Movement* (p19)

*Professionalism: An Overlooked Facet of the WLM* (p21)

*Organisational Politics Within the WLM: Sisterhood or Structurelessness?* (p25)

*Branching Out, Moving Movement: Feminists and Feminism Travel* (p30)

*Municipal Feminism: Where Did It Come From and How Did It Grow?* (p32)

*Women's Initiatives — Issues and Organisation* (p34)

*New Organising Practices* (p37)

*Time for Reflection — Who Were the Municipal Feminists?* (p38)

*Part of the Movement or Part of the Establishment?* (p39)

*Representation and Participation* (p41)

*Municipal Feminism and the State* (p42)

*Conclusion* (p44)

3. Local Government, Gender Equality, and Feminist Workers — 1980 to 2010 (p46)

*Introduction (p46)*

*Council Equalities Work: Legislation and Reorganisation (p46)*

*Gender Equality (p49)*

*Organisational Developments in Local Government (p51)*

*Contemporary Developments: Municipal Feminism, Local Government  
Equalities and the Women's Movement (p52)*

*Legislation, Organisation and Management (p54)*

*Understanding Equalities Workers (p58)*

*Organised Enough, or Too Much to be a Movement? (p64)*

*Conclusion (p67)*

#### 4. Method (p69)

*Introduction (p69)*

*Research Design (p70)*

*Sampling and Access (p71)*

*Conduct of Interviews (p77)*

*Analysis and Coding (p79)*

*Ethical Considerations (p83)*

#### 5. Municipal Feminism and Gender Equality: Practical Approaches to Working in Local Government (p87)

*Introduction (p87)*

*Establishment and Working of the Municipal Feminist Initiatives (p88)*

*Contemporary Gender Equality Working (p91)*

*The Significance of Municipal Working for the Contemporary — Organisational  
Position and Form, and Public Engagement (p93)*

*Organisational Position and Form — Pioneering (p93)*

*Organisational Position and Form — Enthusiastic Follower (p97)*

*Organisational Position and Form — Late Adopter (p103)*

*Public Engagement — Pioneering (p108)*

*Public Engagement — Enthusiastic Follower (p110)*

*Public Engagement — Late Adopter (p112)*

*Conclusion (p115)*

6. From Woman to Gender: Mapping the Conceptual Shifts in Local Government Working (p117)

*Introduction (p117)*

*The Subject of the Municipal Feminist Initiatives (p118)*

*The Subject of the Contemporary Gender Equality Work (p119)*

*Equality in the Municipal Feminist Era (p125)*

*Equality in the Contemporary Era (p127)*

*Complicating the Subject — Diversity and Intersectionality (p131)*

*Complicating the Subject in the Contemporary Era (p135)*

*Gender Mainstreaming (p139)*

*Mainstreaming in the Contemporary Era (p140)*

*Conclusion (p144)*

7. Carrot or Stick? Legislating for Equality (p147)

*Introduction (p147)*

*Legislation and the Municipal Feminist Initiatives (p148)*

*Legislation and the Contemporary Gender Equality Working (p152)*

*Problems and Comparisons (p163)*

*Conclusion (p167)*

8. Professional Feminists: Challenging Local Government Inside Out (p170)

*Introduction (p170)*

*Do the Equality Workers Consider Themselves Feminists? (p171)*

*Relating the Views and Actions of the Equality Workers to the Women's Liberation Movement (p174)*

*The Significance of the Workers' Feminist Views for their Council Working (p178)*

*Defining the Council Gender Equality Workers (p182)*

*Professional Feminists (p192)*

*Conclusion (p201)*

9. Conclusion (p203)

*Future Directions for Research (p212)*

*Feminism and Local Government (p213)*

*Works Cited (p215)*

*Appendices (p225)*

*Interview Guide — Municipal Feminist Workers (p225)*

*Interview Guide — Contemporary Gender Equality Workers (p228)*

*Participant Information Sheet (p230)*

*Interview Consent Form (p231)*



## **Acknowledgements**

This research was funded by the Leverhulme Trust as part of Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project. I have felt incredibly lucky and thankful to them throughout for giving me the opportunity to spend this time carrying out my work.

I am hugely grateful to all those who generously agreed to participate in this research and to the archivists and others who helped me in my search along the way. Without them this project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank my kind and patient supervisors for all their time and wise advice throughout the process. It is impossible to quantify how much this has meant to me! I also want to thank my family and friends who have listened to and supported me throughout the process, especially Jane, and of course, brownie points if you're reading this now.

## 1. Introduction

The question of how best to organise for change is of perennial concern to social movements, and the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) was no exception to this. This thesis extrapolates from this core issue of the UK feminist movement of the 1960s and '70s, to think about how we categorise and understand subsequent developments in feminist activity. In particular it engages with local government gender equality working, and 'municipal feminism'. This is an area which is interesting and of consequence in its own right due to the scope and range of its working. However, when considered in relation to the WLM it is also an area that allows us to ask questions about how we understand feminist ideas and activity. This thesis aims to examine the way in which concepts, particularly the concept of gender equality, are put into practice over time. It does so by considering the ideas and organising of feminist activism in relation to gender equality working in local government between the 1980s and the present day. By studying municipal feminism (gender equality work in local government during the 1980s) I address questions about organisation, professionalism and the state in relation to feminist activity. From both a historical and a personal perspective, decisions about how to organise are fascinating. Anyone who has been involved in activist groups will likely have experienced both the joy and frustration this can bring, and part of this experience is formed by the way a group is organised — whether this is something explicitly decided upon or not. Generally, individuals engaged with feminist politics, and those who study it, care about organisation — and it is intimately enmeshed with issues of legitimacy and efficacy. Thus it is valuable to explore an area — local government — where feminists organise in supposedly unfeminist ways, work with and against the state, and get paid as professionals to do so. During the 1980s and 90s, local government was regarded by some as a fruitful arena in which to address feminist topics — through both the internal and external working of councils. However, this was by no means uncontroversial. In the 30 years since municipal feminism emerged there have also been notable developments in the legislation, policy and practice of gender equality work in local government. These developments require scrutiny, not least given the precarious position they currently occupy (Fawcett Society, 2013, O'Brien, 2013). Without looking in detail at how, for example, the recent Equality Acts have shaped this area, we cannot improve on or

defend them going forward. The history of contestation around feminist ideas and local government, and the ongoing practice and development of gender equality working in this area, means it is an excellent arena in which to examine the relationship between feminist ideas and their translation into working practices.

Unfolding from the overarching aim to examine how concepts rooted in the feminist movement have been put into practice over time in local government, I address three main areas in this thesis. Firstly, I elucidate the shifting discourses and practices around feminism and gender equality in the space of local government. In doing so I argue for the non-linear and at times unexpected ways in which practice has prefigured theory, and legislation, policy and terminology have been stretched, bent, shrunk and fixed. Looking at the way the WLM and subsequent working on gender equality has been characterised, I argue that the two permeate each other in their ideas and approaches. Similarly, in examining how local government gender equality work has taken place, I show the way in which changes and continuity in this are not necessarily mirrored by terminology or concepts. In effect, old practices can continue with new names, and new practices or emphases can go unmarked. Throughout this I also highlight the space this leaves for interpretation; where the knowledge and skills of individual workers are significant in shaping outcomes.

Secondly, I expose the process through which gender equality work in local government takes place and has developed. I present an account of the way in which workers put feminist ideas and legislative developments to work practically. The comparative method I employ enables me to show the significance of this work, and indeed of particular workers, in creating the differences between councils. I also suggest that local government has, and continues to be a useful point for feminist attention — from both an insider and outsider perspective.

Thirdly, I use my data to nuance the boundaries usually drawn around the feminist movement, its location, organisation, and relationship to professional working. This is important for both the history of the movement, and how we understand this work and those who undertake it going forward. In particular I will suggest that we should consider the feminist local government workers as ‘professional feminists’, with a distinctive contribution to make to the project of bringing about social change.

While researching this thesis I was also part of a small team creating a large-scale oral history of the Women's Liberation Movement in the UK (Sisterhood and After), now archived at the British Library. This was a shaping influence on both the framing of my research, and the methodology underlying it. To be clear about my use of terminology throughout the thesis: I use the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) to refer to feminist campaigning and activism during a specific time period, predominantly the 1970s, but with overspill into the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1980s. I use the term feminist movement to refer to feminist campaigning and activism in any period, including the present day. It goes without saying that I take 'feminism' to be multiple rather than singular. These are deliberately open as although I began this research project from the perspective of the WLM oral history, I wanted to allow for a broad and exploratory understanding of different time periods, and forms of activity to promote gender equality. The focus of this thesis is on gender equality work in local government; although in reality this work occurred (and occurs) alongside work on other equalities strands, particularly race equality initiatives. The development and interaction of local government work on the multiple equalities strands would benefit from a holistic examination that is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Having set the terms of debate in this first introductory chapter, the second and third chapters of this thesis lay out the empirical and theoretical field of work that has shaped and situates my own research. Chapter two examines studies of the Women's Liberation Movement in the UK, giving particular attention to its relationship with structured organising and organisations. It then moves on from this to consider extant work addressing 'municipal feminism'. My historical analysis of the WLM enables me to show the way in which several factors have led to less emphasis being placed on the possible connections between feminist activism, professionalism, and formal organising. I argue that these are: its particular context and origins, its position in relation to organising and the state, and trends in the study of social movements.

Chapter three looks forward chronologically to lay out the changes that have taken place in the organisation of local government since the 1980s. In addition to this I discuss contemporary studies examining gender equality in local government and feminist activism. Alongside this it looks at work mapping and theorising feminists working within formal organisations of the state. I highlight the need to study in detail the

individuals and practices involved in local government gender equality work because usually:

we are not given much of a sense of the types of discourses and practices that are put to use by feminists working within state institutional apparatus (Dean, 2010: 29).

Chapter four then expounds the qualitative case study method I employed to conduct my research, and introduces the three councils I studied. These were a London borough council, a council in the far North of the UK, and another in the South West of the UK.

Chapters five to eight utilise the data I gathered to address my four main research questions:

- How does contemporary gender equality working compare to municipal feminism practically?
- How does contemporary gender equality working compare to municipal feminism conceptually?
- What is the significance of legislation in driving and shaping gender equality working?
- How do municipal feminist and contemporary workers relate to social movements, practically and conceptually?

These questions begin with the practice and experience of the initiatives, rather than the concepts underlying them. This is intended to reflect the way that the first municipal feminist initiatives were not a planned practical enactment of a specific theory, or theories, even if this thesis will analyse them theoretically. Chapter five looks at how work on gender equality has changed over time in my three case study sites, by comparing their initial women's initiatives with work taking place today. This maps the history of local government gender equality working during the time period I address in this thesis – focusing on its organisational practice. In doing so I argue that the organisational position and form of the initiatives is significant for the contemporary work of the councils. I highlight the connections that run through from the WLM of the '60s and '70s, to municipal feminism, and the present day work on gender equality. This chapter also introduces my discussion of how the working of the municipal feminist initiatives reflects the practices of gender mainstreaming, prior to this being a common and named practice in local government. As I continue to discuss in the

following chapter, there is not a rigid juncture between the eras marked by terminology. Instead I suggest that similar elements are given different emphases.

Chapter six focuses on the conceptual understanding I analysed as underlying the work of my three case study sites, assessing the way concepts associated with gender equality have developed in local government. This interrogates changes in the terminological landscape, particularly in the move from ‘woman’ to ‘gender’, complicating a straightforward chronology of progress where theory feeds practice, or of decline. I argue that developments in theory or terminology do not necessarily entail a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding equality — and that the knowledge of individual workers is crucial to their interpretation and enactment. So, considering the shift in the subject of the work from woman to gender, I show the ways in which this does and does not lead to an expansion of the scope of work undertaken. In relation to the practice of gender mainstreaming, I show the ways in which municipal feminist practice prefigured this. Only later did it come to be regarded as the standard approach to working on gender equality. Having said this, I also discuss the ways in which the core elements of mainstreaming have been given different emphasis over time, with the essential creative ‘visioning’ element not necessarily maintained.

Chapter seven looks specifically at the role of legislation in the past and present gender equality working of my three sites. Equalities legislation can be seen as an official codification of the concept of gender equality, so examining its use and translation contributes to the overall aim of this thesis to consider the practice of gender equality over time in local government.. Local government is a useful context for evaluating the enactment of the most recent equality legislation in the UK, pointing to ways in which the workers utilise the legislation productively, as well as problematic areas. In doing so I again foreground the significance of individual workers in interpreting national legislation and local government policy. This enactment of legislation and policy is important to evidence if we want to consider their efficacy. Using my data I argue for the significance of the legislation in driving and shaping gender equality working, albeit not uncritically. The space for interpretation around the legislation, in some cases lack of capacity, coupled with the now standardised need for public consultation, makes local government a site where outsiders can intervene. I argue that this can be a positive target for feminist activity for those outside of the councils.

Chapter eight moves on to concentrate on the gender equality workers themselves as a central mode through which concepts of gender equality are brought into practice, which this thesis aims to address. I consider the workers in relation to feminism, the WLM, and attempts to theorise people working within formal, though not political or activist, channels to further gender equality. In doing so I argue that there are several ways in which the aims and organising of the workers connect them to feminist activism outside the state, blurring the boundaries traditionally seen as delineating social movements. This complicates the picture usually painted presenting the autonomous, small group organising of the WLM as inherently authentic, versus more formal organising. Examining the equality workers in relation to the concept of the femocrat, I argue that their working goes beyond the idea of the feminist bureaucrat, particularly during the municipal era. I suggest that focusing on the workers' orientation to making practical change in people's lives offers a way to see both their continuity with the WLM, and their distinctive contribution to a broader feminist project. In doing so I suggest we can also see a way to reconcile the usually opposed notions of the professional and the feminist. This fits into a broader picture where insider and outsider approaches to working are seen as complementary.

## **2. From the Women's Liberation Movement to Municipal Feminism — Organisation and Activism**

### *Introduction*

In order to examine the occurrence and legacy of 'municipal feminism' in the UK, several areas of existing literature require examination. As I aim to consider the relationship between feminism and the enactment of gender equality as a concept over time in local government, this chapter and the next move forward chronologically from the inception of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) to the present. In doing so I discuss work which has documented and analysed particularly feminist ideas and the ways in which these have been carried out during this period. Firstly, in this chapter I discuss work exploring the prior existence of the WLM. This specifically considers the organisational form of the movement, its complex and multiple strands of identity, and the movement of women between other types of organisation and the WLM. In doing so, I lay out the much debated relationship between the WLM and formally structured organising (and organisations) as the background for the development of municipal feminism. I am taking a relatively broad view of the WLM, situating it within a wider and ongoing picture of feminist activism. This is useful in enabling the open consideration of the interaction between its ideas, organising, participants and influence. Secondly, I discuss studies focused on the topic of municipal feminism, in particular the development of organisational structures, initiatives, policies and procedures within local councils, dedicated to the promotion of equality between men and women. Alongside these two areas I also consider work undertaken to theorise social movements, as well as their organisation and the state, which underlies the analysis in later sections of this thesis. In particular, I explore the ambivalent relationship between the feminist movement and the state. I argue that the relationship between different strands of feminist thinking, organising practices and sites of work are not straightforward in the context of the WLM. I make the case for examining feminist ideas and professional gender equality work in local government to consider where and how feminist organising can take place, and the boundaries between the feminist movement and the state.



*The Women's Liberation Movement: Social Movements, Organisation and Identities*

The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in the UK had its roots in the emergence of various radical, new social movements within western capitalist countries in the 1960s (Harriss, 1989). These included student, black and socialist groupings, and ultimately led to the WLM's development of, 'a style of politics which was different both in its content and in its organisational forms' (Harriss, 1989: 35). The social movement theory which developed to analyse these provides a starting point for the examination of the WLM. However, the study of social movements has undergone numerous subsequent shifts, meaning it remains relevant to consider what counts as a social movement. This continues to be a vexed question, which has significant implications for my examination of the WLM and local government gender equality working. Broadly speaking, della Porta and Diani (Porta and Diani, 1999) suggest that scholars from different perspectives tend to be concerned with at least four general features of movements. These are: 1) being constituted from informal interaction networks made of individuals, groups and organisations, 2) sharing belief and solidarity as movements seek to introduce new issues or reframe old ones, 3) taking part in collective action, and 4) using protest rather than formalised political channels to express ideas. In the present study of the WLM and municipal feminism we can utilise and consider how germane these features are. Notably, we can see that these features focus on the ideas of a movement, and how they practice these – which I address in this thesis.

The organisation and structure of social movements has long been central to their internal development, as well as their study. The now iconic initial forms of organising within the WLM in the UK during the late 1960s and '70s have been characterised as predominantly consisting of small autonomous groups — engaged in consciousness raising, and women's centres — providing space and services such as childcare and health or legal advice (Coote and Campbell, 1982, Bouchier, 1983, Gelb, 1986, Coote and Pattullo, 1990, Breitenbach, 1990).<sup>1</sup> These local groupings were then connected through the production and publication of newsletters and magazines, annual WLM conferences, and co-operation on different campaigns. There are different ways of conceptualising the ideas underpinning this approach to organisation and the actions or

---

<sup>1</sup> This was also paralleled in other countries such as the USA (Freeman, 1975, Ferree and Martin, 1995).

agenda it produced. As I outline these it will become evident that there is also considerable overlap between them.

Firstly, the attentiveness to its organisational form by participants in the WLM can be seen as an example of prefigurative politics. This is the notion that an organisation's structure is an opportunity to embody the movement's vision of the ideal society (Breines, 1989, Arnold, 1995). This was something also attempted by parts of the new left in the 1960s prior to the emergence of the WLM. However Bouchier has suggested that the WLM sustained its practice of alternative organisation unusually effectively, and for an impressively long time (Bouchier, 1983). A key element within this prefigurative politics was the attempt to organise without hierarchy. This was twinned with a commitment to the empowerment and involvement of all individuals:

There were no leaders or hierarchies and, after some preliminary faltering, there were no men at meetings or conferences. The new feminists had no respect for established procedures or structures. They wanted to create the kind of power that would grow organically, rather than seize the citadels that men had already constructed. It meant finding ways of organising which encouraged the participation of ordinary women and facilitated open discussion, both to ensure that their aims were rooted in women's experience, and to spread the power of decision-making (Coote and Pattullo, 1990: 90).

This commitment stemmed from the WLM's origins as a reaction against power inequalities, hierarchy and the division of labour between men and women. Sensitivity in developing its organisational forms followed from this (Wainwright, 1979a). Interestingly, there is a strong claim that the radical strand of feminism was responsible for the organisational structure of the WLM (Rees, 2010). Rees discusses in detail the radical feminist objections to models of organisation suggested by socialist feminists at the inception of the movement, including the need for central coordination of the movement. She suggests of radical feminists that:

their critique of strong structure was vindicated after an attempted takeover of the WLM via the WNCC [Women's National Coordinating Committee] by Maoist men and women in 1971 (Rees, 2010: 340).

Following this the WNCC was disbanded and not replaced at the 1971 WLM annual conference. Although it should be pointed out that Maoism did not represent socialist feminism as a whole, Bouchier too seems to support the idea that the left of the WLM tended to be the more centralised and hierarchical (Bouchier, 1983). He also recounts the continued influence of those interested in unstructured, informal organisation. This is exemplified by the way in which a proposal at the 1975 conference — to establish a voluntary working party to suggest ways of organising the movement — was defeated by those wary of the dangers of leadership and bureaucracy.

By 1979 Sheila Rowbotham (not generally positioned as a radical feminist) also characterises the WLM as subscribing to a form of participatory democracy (Rowbotham, 1979). She highlights the long tradition this had had, from democratic religious groups, the new left in the USA, and anti-authoritarian currents in the student movement. Rowbotham doesn't mention the abandonment of the Women's National Coordinating Committee — but the broader thrust of her writing in *Beyond the Fragments* is obviously disillusioned with socialist organising. *Beyond the Fragments* represented a practical call for the left to create a prefigurative way of working that was also able to create unity, particularly as Margaret Thatcher took power. This demonstrates the fact that these ideas did not only exist from the radical feminist perspective. All three writers of *Beyond the Fragments* were life-long socialist feminists, as well as libertarian. I believe that these differing accounts of the ideas underpinning the organisation of the WLM show that it did not have a single point of origin. Both the new left and radical feminists played a role in shaping the organisation of the WLM — which then proceeded to develop, discarding and adopting elements of organisational structure throughout the 1970s and 1980s (as I will discuss later in the context of municipal feminism).

### *The Women's Movement and the State*

Another orientation of the WLM which was formative to its organisational approach was its suspicion towards the state (Rowbotham, 1996), and consequent focus on community organising (Rowbotham, 1979). In the late 1970s Lynne Segal discussed the close parallels between left libertarian and feminist organising — highlighting their valorisation of autonomy, living your politics, organising around your own oppression,

and rejection of vanguards or hierarchy (Segal, 1979). I would argue that this libertarian agenda provides a connection between radical and socialist feminism (of some sorts) in organisational terms that is not often made explicit.

The position of the WLM in relation to the state is significant in considering how it is framed by social movement theory. The state (local, regional and national) provides institutional and political context for both the WLM and municipal feminism. On the one hand, the idea of hostility towards the state fits with new social movement theory's characterisation of activism. However, different elements of the state were also targets of the movement's attention, and people worked on feminist issues within the state — exemplified by municipal feminism. Although some thinkers have recognised this tendency (McCarthy and Wolfson, 1992), others have neglected the importance of the state. For example, Melucci (Melucci, 1982, 1989, 1996) argues that new social movements seek to oppose the intrusion of the state in social life, and do not ask for its increased intervention. This is problematic in the context of the WLM which largely focused its demands on state institutions and organisations (albeit ambivalently). This ambivalence is further nuanced when we consider the different relationships, for example BAME or Northern Irish women had with the state. As I will go on to argue in greater detail, the WLM and local government gender equality workers pose a challenge to some of the usual delineations of social movement activism.

### *Identities Within the Women's Liberation Movement*

As discussed above, there are indications in the literature as to the relationship between different broad strands of feminist identity and the organisation of the WLM. However, there is not a great deal of literature focused specifically on this relationship (see Setch, 2000 for discussion of organisation in London). There are examples to be found if looking at earlier periods of feminism; such as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Rupp and Taylor, 1999), or the 1920s and 1930s (Kean, 1994). It is also more commonly found in the context of the movement in the USA than the UK, for example Ferree and Martin (Ferree and Martin, 1995). This validates my consideration of municipal feminism and its connection to the WLM in terms of organisation and identification with the movement.

There were multiple strands of feminist identity which existed under the banner of the WLM. General histories of the movement (for example Coote and Campbell, 1982, Bouchier, 1983, Caine, 1997, Pugh, 2000) tend to schematise WLM identities around a primary division between socialist and radical feminists, in some cases including liberal feminists. Others suggest a division along the lines of radical and reformist approaches (Gelb, 1986). Although such distinctions provide some insight into the different ideas underlying feminist action within the WLM, they can also skim over important nuances within, and interconnections between these categories (Setch, 2000). For example, Jeska Rees has examined the histories of radical and revolutionary feminism (often conjoined) (Rees, 2010). She also unpicked the familiar narrative of destructive opposition between socialist and revolutionary feminism in the context of the WLM annual conferences. It is evident from accounts of the WLM from a socialist feminist perspective, that this too contained multiple dimensions. At the time Sheila Rowbotham wrote in great detail about the feminist interaction with socialism from Leninist, Trotskyist and Maoist perspectives (Rowbotham, 1979), while Lynne Segal discussed the commonalities between feminist and left-libertarian thought (Segal, 1979). As I stressed earlier, although Rees makes a strong case for the idea that socialist feminists were more likely to tend towards hierarchical organising, it is also important to note the emphasis on non-hierarchical organising made by left-libertarian feminists. Thus, when considering the interconnections between feminist identity and organisation, we need to examine the ways in which multiple feminist identities mingled to create organisational forms.

Early theories of social movements have been critiqued by new social movement theory for being inattentive to the importance of collective identity, values and ideology, and to the structural origins of protests (Melucci, 1989, Mueller, 1992, Porta and Diani, 1999). For the WLM, claiming and shaping the identity and subject 'woman', and the subsequent distinction between sex and gender were of central importance. In later chapters I examine the ways in which these concepts, and the notion of gender equality, have subsequently been shaped and operationalised in the context of local government, and the implications of this. It is also significant (especially in relation to the WLM) that the concept of collective identity recognises the multiplicity of identities that exist within a movement, and indeed within one participant of a movement. As we shall see, in the context of municipal feminism, I examine the way in which feminist and professional identities can co-exist despite conventionally being framed in opposition to

each other. Despite this acknowledgement of multiplicity, della Porta and Diani (1999) have highlighted the importance of claims to the ‘naturalness’ of movement identities as part of strategic moves. Thus symbolic conflicts can often occur over the rejection or resurrection of particular identities related to their naturalness. This has particular utility in the context of the WLM and local government, where the introduction of the term ‘gender’ to challenge the naturalness of female identity has implications that continue to evolve. These understandings of the way in which identities function within a movement can help to shed light on the ways in which particular elements may become especially useful, submerged, or maligned in particular institutional and historical contexts. So as I reflect on feminism and professionalism, and develop the idea of the ‘professional feminist’ in chapter eight, it can also add to our broader understanding of the movement.

Returning to accounts of the history of the WLM, it is notable that many of the general histories of the movement in the UK which I have discussed were written by those actively involved with, or at least who experienced the movement. Of course on the one hand this imbues them with a great deal of first hand insight. However, it is also valuable, and timely, to attempt analysis of the events and ideas of the period that situates them within a broader time span — which this thesis contributes to. As well as general histories of the WLM, there is also a considerable volume of reflective writing from a personal perspective (for example Sebestyen, 1988, Wandor, 1990). These also have limitations from an analytical perspective, valuable as they are as testimony. There are also particular areas which could fruitfully be examined in the context of the WLM that have been somewhat neglected in the literature. I will now discuss the idea of professionalism, which is central to this thesis and the discussion of municipal feminism.

### *Professionalism: An Overlooked Facet of the WLM*

The relationship between feminist and professional identities during the period of the WLM has not been greatly discussed within the existing literature. This is a particularly interesting area of study as it lies at the intersection of identity and organising. In the context of this thesis I am taking ‘professional’ to mean someone who is paid to undertake a role in a skilled capacity, such as the workers in the women’s initiatives. Of

course, the idea of being part of a specific profession, such as the law, has a particular meaning, and there are multiple changing ways in which professionalism has been conceptualised historically (Friedson, 1994). For the purposes of my work, which addresses different decades, taking a broader definition is useful and allows me to include all references to the concept in my documentary or interview data.

In accounts of the 1960s and 1970s professionalism appears to be regarded in negative terms by activists of the WLM — probably because it was seen to entail particular forms of bureaucratic and hierarchical organisation. For example, Sheila Rowbotham critiqued professional, male socialists, suggesting the WLM challenged the idea of the professional revolutionary (Rowbotham, 1979). We can surmise this antagonism between professionalism and the WLM with the statement that, ‘if politics are to be the domain of professionals, most women will be excluded’ (Rowbotham, 1979: 79). Hilary Wainwright reflected the same sentiment, highlighting how the WLM, ‘meant a different way of organising, a way of organising which does not restrict political activity to “the professional”’ (Wainwright, 1979a: 13). At the same time Lynne Segal discussed arguments within a London women’s centre over the payment of workers (Segal, 1979). Eve Setch has also explored this in her more recent publication (Setch, 2000). It is suggested that women feared that paying staff would lead to cooptation and hierarchy — in the transition between volunteer/activist to professional worker. This was also an issue touched upon by Jan McKenley in her recent oral history interview (McKenley, 2011). In this she describes the point at which the co-ordinator of the National Abortion Campaign became a permanent, paid role rather than a voluntary rotating position. McKenley reflects on her feeling that this could weigh down the fleet-footedness of the campaign, and points out that other paid jobs on related topics already existed, for example within local government. These ideas very much suggest an understanding of professionalism as connected to traditional forms of politics and organising — something antithetical to the ideas and operation of the WLM. I would also suggest that the development and prevalence of new social movement theory, emphasising the unprofessional nature of the movements of the ‘60s and ‘70s, has unwittingly led to the neglect of this topic in relation to the history of the WLM.

Bouchier, writing in 1983, suggested that this opposition to professionalism was successfully acted out by feminists. In his view in contrast to other social movements there remained, ‘very few women who may be regarded as “professional feminists”’

(Bouchier, 1983: 179). There is no doubt that these were strongly felt beliefs at the time. Yet I believe the strength of this statement could be disputed if we move forward just a few years after Bouchier was writing, to the time of his book's publication in the early 1980s. To do this we need to examine gender equality workers in local government in relation to feminism and the women's movement. In chapter eight I address this while answering my fourth research question, asking how municipal feminist and contemporary workers relate to social movements, practically and conceptually.

Sarah Green's work considering this period of the 1980s is unusual in discussing the increasing number of lesbian feminists employed in a professional capacity in London, for example within local government (Green, 1997). It might be that the strong (and understandable) opposition to professionalism within the WLM (given the particular construction of the professional discussed above), has contributed to the lack of attention subsequently given to such historical examples that reveal its connections to feminism. Studies which have looked at women and professional identities over the 20<sup>th</sup> century provide some context for feminists' hostility. For example, Cowman and Jackson discuss the ambivalent relationship women had with assuming a professional identity in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Cowman and Jackson, 2005). This was contrasted with its positive implications for men seeking to gain status in the same period. Professional women (and the occupations associated with women) were denigrated. In a familiar problematisation, they suggest that although first-wave feminism had allowed middle-class women to join the professions, this had, 'done little to transform structure and agency within occupational cultures or to challenge assumptions about gender, sexuality and the family' (Cowman and Jackson, 2005: 176).

In some ways this earlier period can be seen to support the suspicions of feminists of the WLM towards the idea of professional working, in this case not related to political principles but perhaps an acknowledgement or worry that replicating the working of men would not lead to the desired change, social or political. The WLM apparently rejected the notion that professional women could act as the bearers of new values within traditional organisations. It also opposed the professional organisation of its own endeavours. It is not difficult to understand such feelings, particularly in a context where professional working was arguably positioned more rigidly within a classed and gendered workplace that largely excluded women. However, it is also important to parse the meanings being ascribed to the professional by the WLM, as it is plainly not



only used to describe the traditional professions. Important facets of this include the organisation of work (hierarchically), and being paid for work — which as I have discussed were contentious topics of debate within the WLM. There are also other elements such as acting with professional knowledge, competency, and training. These are interesting to consider given that we could view the involvement of participants in consciousness raising, and other WLM activities, as a form of training for membership of the feminist movement. As I argue in chapter eight, there are good reasons to consider some of the council gender equality workers as ‘professional feminists’. The point I wish to highlight here, is that once placed out of their immediate historical context, many of the elements of professional working are not at root antithetical to the aims of the WLM. If we acknowledge the multiplicity of the ‘professional’ and the ‘feminist’ it becomes difficult to maintain their binary opposition. In this case it seems wise to support (and attend to) Cowman and Jackson’s suggestion that one of the ongoing challenges of women’s history (in which I would include that of the WLM):

lies in balancing the recovery of personal and public achievement with a critical analysis of the cultural frameworks, ideologies and political preferences that have shaped both women’s endeavors and their effect on others (Cowman and Jackson, 2005: 176).

The tension between the WLM and the notion of professionalism can thus be seen as specifically linked to the cultural, ideological, and political climate of the period, rather than taken at face value as the opposition of tradition and radical emancipatory politics. In this light, Perriton’s work on feminism and professional identities in the period prior to the WLM is also very useful, as she too raises questions about a stereotypical opposition. Perriton examines the working of the British Federation of Business and Professional Women from the post-war period until the 1960s, arguing that their operation anticipated femocratic practice that later developed (Perriton, 2007). This supports the notion that feminists working differently from the WLM have at times been neglected because they are:

not thought of as ‘proper’ feminists because feminists work in collective, non-hierarchical organisations and not bureaucracies, they are an elite of well-paid managers whose interests are different from those of the majority of women or,

finally, they cannot be legitimate agents of the women's movement because they are not representative of it either demographically or politically (Perriton, 2007: 95).

This is informative for the wider discussion of what constitutes the boundaries of the women's movement, and indeed what should be considered its contemporary legacy. Examining municipal feminism, and contemporary council working on gender equality, allows me to interrogate some assumptions about what can be included in the WLM and feminist movement more broadly, as well as how and where feminist activity can take place.

Having discussed different strands of identity contained within the WLM, some of their implications for its organisational form, and the understudied relationship between professionalism and feminism, I will now examine the consequences of these for the workings of the movement.

#### *Organisational Politics within the WLM: Sisterhood or Structurelessness?*

There were evidently many positive outcomes on both the personal and societal level which stemmed from the organising practices of the WLM. The small group organising of the WLM was intended to maximise the accessibility of feminist politics, allowing all women to participate and develop themselves (Segal, 1979). This was extremely important in enabling the movement to grow so quickly and successfully. Coote and Pattullo have described the way in which women learned new skills and ways of campaigning (Coote and Pattullo, 1990). Ferree and Martin similarly suggest that, 'the personal passage through a feminist organisation by feminist activists has been and remains transforming for many' (Ferree and Martin, 1995: 5).

Scholars of the WLM have also pointed to the great volume of love and caring present between women active in the movement (Taylor, 1995). This is something exemplarised in Rebecca Johnson's oral history interview. In this she recounts the care taken of women with mental health problems, even within the challenging environment of the camp at Greenham Common (Johnson, 2011). The many experiences of personal development within the WLM were also coupled with the reshaping of political boundaries, encapsulated by the notion that 'the personal is political'. Issues of

childcare and domestic abuse became plausible political topics because of the activism of the WLM, informed by the personal experiences of its participants.

From the perspective of social movement theory a movement's organising practices are regarded as a central element of its strategy, and connected to collective identity (Porta and Diani, 1999). Much individual and collective experience is constituted in terms of organisation (Perrow, 2002), and it is closely related to the way in which movements develop over time. Michels' iron law of oligarchy famously suggested that organisations tend to become more oligarchic in their operation as their resource base expands (Michels, 1959). This process is arguably also connected to movements becoming more firmly structured, 'institutionalised', or indeed bureaucratised. These concepts for categorising modes and degrees of organisation have been controversial, and della Porta and Diani suggest that, 'every campaign of mobilisation since 1968 has taken the 'organisational question' as central' (Porta and Diani, 1999: 161). However, the extent to which these patterns are inevitable in social movements remains up for discussion (Saunders, 2009). The way in which a movement is deemed to organise also has profound implications for its designation as existent (or not). Visible demobilisation can be linked to the development of political, legal and administrative instruments to carry out movement aims — so called 'implementation regimes' and 'legal mobilization' (Zald et al., 2005). The development of women's and equalities initiatives could be understood in this light in relation to the WLM. However, as I go on to argue in subsequent chapters, this masks important continuities between the issues and organising of the WLM and local government equalities initiatives.

Organisational theorists have also been important in recognising that movements bring social change through organisational behaviour, via organisational policy (Zald et al., 2005). This is one way in which scholars have attempted to theorise the interaction of social movements with organisations or institutions. Movements can influence organisational environments through, 1) changing categorizations, justice claims and consciousness raising, and by changing assumptions about right actions and routine grounds and practices, 2) through surveillance and sanctions, and 3) indirectly through movement influence on public policy and agencies (Zald et al., 2005). These categorisations are useful in my present consideration of feminist influence within local government. As well as organisations being sites of movement influence, they can also play a role in supporting or denying particular identity constructions (Mueller, 2003).

Of particular import are political institutions that provide the criteria for group identification. For example, della Porta and Diani have highlighted the way in which the homogeneity of Scotland is more easily recognised in an institutional context where the UK is governed from London (Porta and Diani, 1999).

Notwithstanding the personal and political change wrought by the WLM, its organisational strategies have not been evaluated without criticism. Acker made the important point in 1995 that feminists and *others* committed to organising in egalitarian ways have faced many problems (Acker, 1995). This reminds us of the need to consider the specific context of the WLM in its organisational choices as we seek to analyse its modes of operation and legacy. What Acker makes clear is the intense effort involved in sustaining collective, non-hierarchical and participatory organising against the norm — meaning that other group action may be sidelined or unachievable. In the late 1970s Rowbotham characterised this as a classic issue of balance between democracy/participation and efficiency (Rowbotham, 1979). Coote and Pattullo have also pointed out that, ‘an open, unstructured organisation did not necessarily function in a fair and democratic way’ (Coote and Pattullo, 1990: 91).

The notion that participatory democracy (not exclusive to the WLM) has natural limits has been repeatedly discussed in the literature. Acker suggests it requires small group size, common goals, relatively equal knowledge between members, flexible and non-competitive members, and a benign organisational environment (Acker, 1995). Clearly in the context of an expanding movement this is problematic. Rowbotham extended this, pointing out that people who cannot be present are automatically excluded, whoever turns up can reverse decisions, and that if only a few people turn up they must take on all tasks and responsibility (Rowbotham, 1979). Of course this works well if people are dedicated, constructive and respectful — but otherwise is stressful. The key criticism is that in some ways the WLM, in seeking to overturn tradition — lost understanding of the utility of formal procedures. Jo Freeman wrote extensively on this issue as early as 1970, with her article *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* widely circulated (Freeman, 1970, 1975). Freeman argued for the need for feminists to move beyond prejudice against organisation and structure. She points out that no group is actually unstructured — and that claims to being unstructured only serve to mask the power structures developed undemocratically within any group. The unproductive nature of working without formal structures is also a serious problem for what purports

to be a political movement. As she sharply noted, ‘unstructured groups may be very effective in getting women to talk about their lives; they aren’t very good for getting things done’ (Freeman, 1970). Freeman argued of feminists:

Many turn to other political organisations to give them the kind of structured, effective activity that they have not been able to find in the women’s movement (Freeman, 1970).

Ultimately imploring feminists to get organised using a democratic and accountable model, she suggested feminism should:

establish its priorities, articulate its goals, and pursue its objectives in a coordinated fashion. To do this it must get organised — locally, regionally and nationally (Freeman, 1970).

This was a long-standing discussion as nine years later Lynne Segal too suggested that the WLM’s mode of organising at times worked to exclude as well as include. She argued that lack of formal organisation made it difficult for working class women not related by friendship to a women’s group to get involved (Segal, 1979).

Just as the flip side of informality could mean exclusivity, intense personal relationships within the WLM could be stressful as well as supportive. Adams has described how groups could turn inward into excessive, unconstructive and painful self-criticism (Adams, 1989). She recounts that she later realised this was an occurrence many other women within the WLM also experienced. Part of this personal stress appears to have been the result of the huge commitment such organising required. Sheila Rowbotham put it wryly:

no hierarchy, no elites, no chair, no committees, no speakers and even no meetings in some cases...or the meetings merged into and became life. Thus life became meetings (Rowbotham, 1979: 30).

There have been other criticisms of WLM organising, and how this connected to the identity of individuals through the merging of the personal and the political. For example, the idea that the concept ‘the personal is political’ became watered down to the point of meaninglessness, with detrimental consequences for organisation. It has been suggested by some that the phrase came to be interpreted to mean that literally all

acts were political (Segal, 1979, Bouchier, 1983), rather than there being a connection between the two. This begs the question of how one then prioritises actions, or sets an agenda in the context of the women's movement, if every act is political. How exactly is the personal political? Adams suggested that this unanswered question from the start meant that the political was allowed to become over-personalised, leading to individualism and self-analysis (Adams, 1989).

Leading from the notion that the personal is political, identity politics could also be problematic within feminist groups. In some cases it has been suggested that feminist groups ended up creating their own hierarchy of oppression — based on whose identity was the most marginalised (Adams, 1989, Harriss, 1989). Discussion of marginalisation was also related to issues of organisation in perhaps surprising ways. Lynne Segal suggested that libertarians within the WLM could feel marginalised by those on the left due to the latter's greater organisation (Segal, 1979). As I discuss in subsequent sections, this is a fascinating mirror of criticisms which women of the WLM received from external detractors — suggesting that the WLM was too organised to represent 'real' women. Thus we can see that mode of organisation is bound up with the identity of the WLM in multiple and at times conflicting ways.

As well as the potential that personalised politics could result in navel-gazing, dealing with large scale debate and coalition were also difficult in an organisational context privileging the small group. Of course this was a problem due to the huge success and appeal of feminist ideas! Rees has reconstructed the way in which the WLM conferences fell victim to their own success — with chaos in 1976, 1977 and 1978 as 1,500–3,000 delegates all tried to have their equal say and participate (Rees, 2010). Relatedly, it has been suggested that the organisational requirements of some strands of feminist identity are in direct contradiction with the structural features of coalition working (Arnold, 1995). Coalitions struggle to resolve conflicts which relate to collective identity, working better when there are issues which can be at least superficially agreed on. It is interesting to consider the limits feminists of the WLM may have inadvertently placed on their own organisation in this way. In the context of the USA, but with relevance for the UK, Remington has argued that feminist organisations have struggled to survive as they rarely consider what it would take to achieve more than the bare minimum (Remington, 1991). This has led some writers on the WLM to suggest that ultimately, towards the end of the 1970s, its organisational

form needed to change. Writing in 1979, Segal suggested that in the context of harsh government cuts, 'it is forms of organisation which have national and international perspectives and links which seem to be even more necessary for successful struggles today' (Segal, 1979: 201). She went on to argue that the tendency of feminists to bypass institutions such as trade unions and local councils was no longer acceptable. Similarly, slightly later Bouchier suggested that:

the forms of organisation which emerged from the 1960s now seem unequal to the challenge of the 1980s, and one of the major debates of the movement today centres on the kinds of organisational structures most likely to sustain and strengthen the drive for women's liberation (Bouchier, 1983: 218).

*Branching Out, Moving Movement: Feminists and Feminism Travel*

Having discussed some benefits and problems with the WLM's organising, I will now examine the movement of women between it and other organisations. To some extent this movement and influence can be discerned from my earlier discussion of the longer history of organisational forms, such as participatory democracy. Again, this is not a topic that has received huge attention within the literature on the WLM. Considering the organisations women were engaged in prior to the WLM, there are some accounts of women moving from socialist organisations (Harriss, 1989, Wandor, 1990). However, there is little about the ways in which women were engaged with other organisations, or how organisations such as the church or schools were influential. Thomlinson's (2013) work is a valuable example here, which includes discussion of the significance of the church for some black feminists. The issue of organisational form related to socialism is ambiguous as on the one hand, it is implied that feminists were frustrated with socialist organising. Simultaneously, it seems that socialist ideas about organising travelled into the WLM with women who moved (Rees, 2010).

There is greater reference to the movement of women from the WLM into other organisations such as CND, trade unions or the Labour Party (Rowbotham, 1996). Of course even within the WLM itself it has been suggested that women's groups moved from consciousness raising to develop a broader range of activities during the 1970s (Breitenbach, 1990). Those moving even further, to work primarily within other

movements or organisations, has been depicted as at least partly resulting from the difficulties of WLM organising (Freeman, 1970, Rowbotham, 1979, Harriss, 1989). However, the movement into other organisations does not necessarily have to be viewed in such negative or exclusive terms. Working in a different organisation could represent a continuation of feminist politics for some women, as is suggested by the idea that:

the generation of feminists who had come of age politically in the seventies took their feminism into political parties, into trade unions, into their working lives, and into the continuing transformation of personal relationships (Breitenbach, 1990: 219).

Again, here it is interesting to consider Rowbotham, Segal and Wainwright's intervention on these topics in 1979. Wainwright argued that it was plain to see:

the limits of traditional principles of revolutionary and social democratic organizations, in light of the advances and insights made by recent movements, starting with the women's liberation movement (Wainwright, 1979a: 6).

For Wainwright, joining the Labour Party was not an obvious option for some socialist feminists (Wainwright, 1979b). However, there are also many accounts of women who did move from the WLM to become involved in Labour politics and work within local councils (Sebestyen, 1988, Harriss, 1989, Coote and Pattullo, 1990). Jane Hutt, Minister for Finance in the Welsh Assembly, too exemplarises this, as she explains her move from working within campaigns of the women's movement during the 1970s, to co-ordinating Welsh Women's Aid and joining the Labour Party as a councillor (Hutt, 2012). Hutt explains her rationale for wanting to influence government in this way.

It is important to observe that the majority of the literature discussing the organisation of the WLM, and the movement of women between different organisations, comes from a broadly socialist feminist perspective. Although this may partly be a product of the significance of socialist feminism and leftist politics within the WLM, it seems unlikely this is the whole story. As mentioned earlier, Sarah Green contributes to this in her discussion of lesbian feminists working professionally in London during the 1980s (Green, 1997). She also considers very serious organisational discussions among lesbian feminists in London during this period, suggesting that this was not only the territory of socialist feminists.



The silence within the literature on this topic might be the result of a pragmatic modification of their feminist identity by those seeking to work in non-traditional feminist ways. As discussed above, the ‘professional feminist’ remains something of an oxymoron and therefore a highly sensitive issue, when viewed from the perspective of the WLM. This makes it ripe for academic exploration. In chapter eight, examining the professionals involved in municipal feminism in greater detail, I explore their backgrounds and relationship to the WLM and feminist movement.

*Municipal Feminism: Where Did It Come From and How Did It Grow?*

So far I have discussed literature which examines the identities and organising of the WLM, including the different organisations which some feminists moved into. I now move to consider literature which examines local government as a particular arena of work and organisation into which feminists moved. The phenomena of women’s initiatives within local councils during the 1980s and 1990s is particularly interesting and relevant for several reasons. Firstly, it provides an example of the movement of feminists and ideas from the WLM into the state and modes of organisation initially regarded as antithetical to the movement, as discussed earlier. Thus it could be seen to illustrate the evolution or nuancing of feminist ideas about the state and organisation. However, we might equally ask whether or not so called ‘municipal feminism’ should be considered part of the WLM. If municipal feminism involved organising and professional working seen to clash with elements of the movement, it could be seen to make it necessarily distinct. The delineation of social movement boundaries can be made based at least partly on organisational form, and as discussed earlier, the positioning of a movement in relation to the state has been a significant point of analysis for social movement theory. Thus considering municipal feminism allows me to engage directly with key questions about the definition of a movement and activism, using the WLM as a specific example.

Secondly, the echoes of the municipal era political climate surrounding contemporary gender equality working adds to the relevance of this area of study. For example, arguments made during the 1980s about the disproportionate impact of cuts on women — as the majority of employees and consumers of public sector services (Webster, 1985) — are eerily familiar when read today, and raise questions about the extent to

which any feminist gains are reversible. It is also fair to say that the significance of municipal feminism has been underplayed in relation to the history of the WLM (MacKay, 2008). This may in part be as it falls in a time period that remains only recent history, and seems less obviously connected to the broader study of the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In addition to this, as I argued earlier, the prevalence of new social movement theory, and particular conceptions of the WLM in relation to organising and professionalism, have also affected this positioning.

At the time, women's council initiatives were not singularly welcomed by WLM activists. However, literature examining the movement suggests that this sort of insider working with the state has been integral to its efficacy, in conjunction with the types of outsider working seen to characterise the WLM (Freeman, 1975, Wainwright, 1979a, Bouchier, 1983, Mazur and Stetson, 1995, Threlfall, 1996, Chappell, 2002). This is not to denigrate either approach, but to stress their symbiosis.

Work discussing the origins of women's initiatives within councils suggests they had a significant relationship with the new urban left. As Susan Halford pointed out in her important study of women's initiatives, by the end of the 1970s many more women and feminists were participating in the Labour Party and trade unions, gaining some influence (Halford, 1990). This coincided with moves within the Labour Party to change its structure through the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy set up in 1971. This interest in greater participation and democracy can be seen to chime with some of the organisational ideals of the WLM. It led to the increased influence of educated, middle-class as opposed to traditional working-class Labour members. The electoral losses suffered by the party in the late 1970s also arguably made it more amenable to the ideas of the WLM. However, although the women's initiatives of the 1980s did largely occur in Labour councils, this was not exclusively the case (Halford, 1990, 1991, Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). In addition to this, although the 1980s saw rebellion against central government and 'municipal socialism' in some Labour councils — these were often not the same ones that championed the development of women's initiatives. Lovenduski and Randall highlight the example of the hard left leadership of Liverpool council after 1982, who opposed any calls for the establishment of a women's initiative (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). Thus the relationship between women's initiatives and the Labour Party was not one of straightforward patronage. Although

municipal feminism was connected to party politics, it is not reducible to it and warrants individual study.

Susan Halford's insightful and extensive research on women's initiatives in the late 1980s is a key reference point for this thesis. Among other things Halford mapped the occurrence of the initiatives nationally against various demographic factors. This suggested that areas with women's initiatives were likely to have a higher than average number of people from class groupings 3 and 4, were less likely to include people from groupings 1 and 2, were slightly more likely to be urban, and had a higher than average BME population (Halford, 1990). Halford also found that areas with women's initiatives tended to have slightly less traditional gender relations — i.e. more single women, less nuclear families, and more working women. In terms of political patterns, as discussed above, women's initiatives were associated with Labour controlled councils (84% of initiatives taking place under Labour control in Halford's study). Of course it is also notable that as only 12.5% of local authorities (from her sampling) had an initiative, meaning the majority of Labour councils still did not have one. It is interesting that a much greater number of councils (49%) claimed to have some sort of policy or staffing related to equality work. However, Halford strongly suggests that the councils without formal initiatives displayed a poor understanding of what equal opportunity meant or would involve, or indeed how inequality operates (Halford, 1990). This supports the argument for the significance of women's initiatives in developing equalities policy and practice. In subsequent chapters I go on to examine the legacy of women's initiatives further, through comparing them to the work being carried out today in local government on gender equality.

### *Women's Initiatives — Issues and Organisation*

With the political background of women's initiatives sketched out — what exactly were they, what did they do and how were they organised? There is a body of literature which focuses on describing the organising and activities of different women's council initiatives during the 1980s (Goss, 1984, Button, 1984, Edwards, 1988, 1989, Harriss, 1989, Halford, 1990, Brownill and Halford, 1990, Halford, 1991, Bruegel and Kean, 1995, Edwards, 1995). There is also some discussion of the phenomena within larger works on women and politics (Coote and Pattullo, 1990, Lovenduski and Randall,

1993). There is generally consensus that women's initiatives involved council committees or sub-committees dedicated to the development of women's equality, the first of these being established in Lewisham in 1978/1979.<sup>2</sup> The terms of reference of initiatives varied considerably — some with a wide vision of what might be included in action to increase opportunities and improve services for women, and others which just considered council employment policies. Similarly, initiatives had a wide range of resource levels in terms of funding and staffing — but this did not necessarily relate to their levels of success (Halford, 1990).

The Greater London Council (GLC) was the top-tier local government administrative body for Greater London between 1965 and 1986. Its women's committee (established in 1981) can be seen to epitomise the early ideal of an initiative. It had a huge budget (£7 million in 1983/4), support staff and political backing (Goss, 1984). Even without such resources, the work of other women's initiatives covered similar areas. Issues attended to by them included direct services for women (such as childcare provision), community consultation used to modify existing practices in favour of women (such as housing provision), and developing council employment practices and conditions (such as parental rights) (Halford, 1990, Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). Susan Halford's examination of women's initiatives in the late 1980s details the areas of policy mentioned by initiatives from most to least mentioned as: employment, training, childcare, health, childcare (external to council), health (external to council), lesbians, ethnic minorities, ethnic minorities (external to council), lesbians (external to council), disabled (external to council), training (external to council), disabled, employment (external to council) (Halford, 1990). The focus leans towards internal policies designed to affect the local authority workforce, but not exclusively. It is also notable that this list does not include grant aid given to other women's groups, which might change the emphasis. Halford also reveals that women's initiatives were expanding their areas of policy over time, with very few showing contraction. This is also contrasted with councils without a women's initiative, which she suggests showed much less or no policies at all on women. Thus the growing strength and significance of women's initiatives during this period seems evident.

---

<sup>2</sup> Some accounts suggest this first initiative began in 1979 (Riley, 1990) and others 1978 (Edwards, 1988, Coote and Pattullo, 1990).

There are certain elements which seem to have been required for the successful operation of the women's initiatives. The most important of these were political backing, organisational response and external political mobilisation (Halford, 1990, 1991). The corporate positioning of initiatives within the council and their resources were also seen to support these (Button, 1984, Edwards, 1989, Halford, 1990). Feminist practice and links to local women's groups were other factors which have been discussed in relation to women's initiatives. A clear strategy and the cooperation of the rest of the council were also key ingredients for the successful operation of women's initiatives, as bureaucratic resistance and empire building was common (Halford, 1992). It has been suggested that women's initiatives would have benefited from the legitimising influence of legislation requiring local authorities to take action on equality between men and women (Edwards, 1989), as was the case with racial equality. For example, employment — the most mentioned area of policy dealt with by initiatives — was one of the few areas supported by national policy. It seems likely that this helped legitimise it as an area for action. With several significant pieces of national legislation having been subsequently passed in relation to gender equality, this thesis contributes to its analysis in relation to local government working and workers — a key site of its implementation. In chapter seven in particular I focus on the relationship legislation has with the municipal feminist initiatives and present day gender equality work.

Without wider supporting legislation, women's initiatives had a precarious legal status (Coote and Pattullo, 1990), making them more reliant on political patronage. Some of the initial pioneering initiatives, such as the GLC's, did not last very long. Thatcher's response to Labour's local government challenge was to abolish the GLC and remove a range of powers from local authorities (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). Under pressure some councils abolished their women's committees, others subsumed them into small units within equal opportunities committees, and some carried on (Lieberman, 1989, Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). This precarious status also related to the apparent lack of clarity councils had about their duties under existing legislation (Edwards, 1988). Given recent developments (the Gender Equality Duty which came into force in 2007 and the 2010 Equalities Act) which place just such a duty clearly on local authorities — it is important to examine how their genesis relates to women's initiatives, and indeed what impact they have had on council working. This led to the development of my

research question that I address in chapter seven, asking what the significance of legislation is in driving and shaping gender equality working.

### *New Organising Practices*

Drawing from the ideas of the WLM, women's initiatives (with varying success) introduced organising practices dramatically different from the classical bureaucracy of council organisation (Brownill and Halford, 1990). This was part of their attempts to influence the organising of councils more widely — not just the creation of a small island of feminism within council structures. Some initiatives sought to organise collectively, without hierarchy and as women-only spaces, though these were in the minority of initiatives (Brownill and Halford, 1990). However, it is likely that women's initiatives were still less hierarchical and more collective than other council units. There are also examples which suggest collective working did not last long when it was attempted within women's initiatives (Lieberman, 1989), partly due to its impracticality within the bureaucratic organisation of the council. Sheila Button in her detailed study of Haringey suggested that such working arrangements actually, 'lead to a waste of resources and restrict the capacity for specialist work' (Button, 1984: 47). For example, if all employees of a women's initiative were on the same (usually low) grade without a designated manager, it could make interaction with other committees and units difficult. This is because they were not viewed as authoritative and might not be allowed access to information. On the other hand, if some workers were on higher grades (to make for a better position in relation to the rest of the council) but employees still sought to work collectively within the women's initiative, it could lead to unfair and uncompensated responsibility being placed on the lower graded workers. Of course these issues are related to the nature of council organisation — and its contrast with any ideas about collective working. Councils have been seen as primary examples of bureaucratic organisations (Brownill and Halford, 1990, Halford, 1992) — characterised by hierarchy of authority, a clear system of rules, impersonality, efficiency and employment based on technical qualification (Blau, 1956). This characterisation of bureaucracy developed by Weber does have limitations, including its failure to explain the ways in which bureaucratic organisations can be inefficient, and lack of attention to the informal dynamics of an organisation (Halford 1992). However, it does still remain

useful in thinking about the organisation of councils, as it highlights some of the features which clashed with the working of women's initiatives. Susan Halford discusses in detail the features of bureaucratic council organising that made it difficult for women's initiatives to create organisational change (Halford, 1992). Primary here is the notion of organisational inertia — as councils are very stable organisations, trying to educate people in new ways of working is difficult and people are fearful of failure. Division of labour also means that competition can occur between council departments. As women's initiatives often sought to work across different areas this could lead to problems. For example, some departments saw women's initiatives as interfering with or encroaching on their work.

Another crucial (and possibly more successful) way that women's initiatives sought to shift council organising, was through their attempts to democratise its working (Goss, 1984, Edwards, 1988, Brownill and Halford, 1990, Halford, 1990, Stokes, 1998). Thus the majority of initiatives used strategies such as public consultation and co-optation to draw in women's opinions as drivers of council policy and practice. The work taken up by women's initiatives was a reflection of what they heard from women during their extensive efforts to consult with local people (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). This also put pressure on other areas of the council to take seriously the requests being made by women's initiatives.

Seeking to explore the practice and legacy of municipal feminism led to the development of my research questions that are explored in chapters five and six. These ask how contemporary gender equality working compares to municipal feminism, practically and conceptually.

### *Time for Reflection — Who Were the Municipal Feminists?*

The personal experiences of women involved in council women's initiatives (including councillors, officers, support workers, co-optees, and grant recipients) is present to a degree in most of the available resources on the topic. Interview quotations with initiative workers illustrate and inform various articles. Coote and Pattullo utilise case studies including the mixed experiences and varied perspectives of councillors and co-optees (Coote and Pattullo, 1990). The backgrounds of women working within them are

found to be within the women's movement, community work, trade unions and local politics/government (Lieberman, 1989, Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). This suggests a connection with the WLM, but also, as Lieberman highlights, meant that there may have been steep learning curves for the women without council experience. In chapter eight I consider the individuals who worked within women's initiatives, and those who work on gender equality in councils today. In doing so I examine their relationships to the WLM and feminism, and how they perceive their roles. This responds to my research question which asks how municipal feminist and contemporary workers relate to social movements, practically and conceptually.

In 1985 Martlew et al used interviews to look at the transition from political activism to office holding in Scottish women who were community activists, party activists and councillors or candidates (Martlew et al., 1985). This is informative for my examination of the connections between WLM activism and professional work carried out by council women's initiatives. Firstly, they highlight the importance of community involvement for women as a preliminary to elected office. Women councillors were more likely than men to have been involved in, for example, community councils and tenants associations prior to their election (Martlew et al., 1985). In addition to this, Martlew et al found that in contrast to councillors, party activists had little or no involvement with community groups or organisations (Martlew et al., 1985). This is interesting as I go on to argue (in chapter eight) that a focus on practical change for people in the community is a key element in understanding the equality workers I interviewed. I suggest this is both a link to the feminist movement, as well as part of their distinctive contribution as 'professional feminists'. Martlew et al's work appears to support this hypothesis, if we consider that both women and councillors were more likely than those involved as political party activists to have a background of community work. This suggests that working within the council, rather than focusing on party politics, is correlated with an interest in community work.

### *Part of the Movement or Part of the Establishment?*

However positive the developments created by women's initiatives, it is certainly true that there were also difficulties with their operation, as well as opposition to them from various sides. This included people within councils as well as the WLM. It seems likely



that part of the WLM's suspicion of women's initiatives was derived from its original position of suspicion, if not outright hostility, to the state and professional working. Halford discusses debates over women's initiatives within the pages of the WLM magazine *Spare Rib* (Halford, 1990), and Coote and Pattullo also report controversy within the movement over women's initiatives (Coote and Pattullo, 1990). The worry that women's initiatives represented the co-optation or even destruction of the WLM is frequently mentioned. For example, grant-giving from women's initiatives was seen by some as (and in some cases was) a burden on women's organisations, who had to jump through hoops and align with council criteria to get and maintain funding (Harriss, 1989, Halford, 1990). It has also been suggested that in some cases, tokenistic women's initiatives produced the illusion of feminist activism (Button, 1984, Halford, 1990). In a similar vein it has been argued that due to the constraints of council bureaucracy and politics, women's initiatives inevitably ended up espousing watered down versions of feminist ideology (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). However, with hindsight women's initiatives clearly did bring positive feminist change into the organisation and practice of councils — even if they did not stick strictly to some of the early ideals and organisational principles of the WLM. These achievements include introducing and legitimising the discussion of the gender dimensions of council policy and practice, and pioneering flexible, equal opportunity employment practices (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). Building on this, this thesis contributes to the critical evaluation of municipal feminism and its relationship to gender equality working in local government today.

As well as criticisms from the WLM, women's initiatives faced particular problems around the issues of representation and participation.<sup>3</sup> Although initiatives sought different ways to gain participation from their local communities, this was not always successful. Co-optation could lead to burn-out and disillusionment as women unused to council working struggled to understand protocol, and the realpolitik of meetings (Brownill and Halford, 1990, Stokes, 1998). This raises questions about the utility of such democratising practices. From a critical perspective, Cockburn's study of local government in the 1970s argued not only that 'democratising' moves within local government were not new, but that they operated primarily to the benefit of the local

---

<sup>3</sup> This paralleled the significant and difficult debates and developments which had been going on within the WLM in relation to its (lack of) representativeness regarding issues of race and ethnicity (along with other significant axes of inequality such as sexuality). See Thomlinson (2013) for the particular discussion of this.

state (Cockburn, 1977). Although this is instructive, it is also notable that the democratising moves of women's initiatives were often not endorsed by either central government or the parliamentary Labour Party (Harriss, 1989), arguably placing them in a more ambivalent position. Later in this chapter I discuss in more detail how we can understand nuances in the operation of the state in relation to particular interests.

### *Representation and Participation*

The issue of representation and representativeness runs in tandem with attempts to increase participation in local government. It is interesting to consider whether women's initiatives meant to be representative, and if so how and of who. It certainly seems that some early initiatives reproduced the white, middle-class demographic that the WLM had itself faced criticism for (Lieberman, 1989, Coote and Pattullo, 1990, Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). However, there is also evidence to suggest that rigorous attempts were made to diversify the participants who engaged with women's initiatives (Goss, 1984). For example, some women's committees developed reserved places (for example for black, disabled, or lesbian women) (Coote and Pattullo, 1990, Goss, 1984). Kirsten Hearn discusses her co-optation onto the GLC Women's Committee in her oral history interview (Hearn, 2012). Race relations initiatives were also developed within local government at this point in time, and generally had higher profiles and levels of support as well as legislative backing (Edwards, 1988). It seems likely that this would have had implications for the work of the women's initiatives, and indeed the relationship between the two is an area that requires further exploration. Although this thesis is focused on gender, I consider the attempts of the women's initiatives and present day gender equality working to be representative, and to influence the councils more broadly to be so too. In chapter six I consider the concepts of diversity and intersectionality in relation to the working of my three case study sites. In doing so I examine how this has been addressed and developed in the decades following the creation of the women's initiatives.

Some literature mentions particular groups of participants dominating the women's initiatives. This is particularly with reference to more organised women, who were thus seen as better able to argue for what they wanted from the initiative (Harriss, 1989, Coote and Pattullo, 1990). This was despite the use of open meetings to try to

circumvent this issue in relation to co-optees. This draws us back to the issue of organisation, and the initial WLM criticism of formal organising, but we can see here that rejecting formal organisation does not resolve the issue. In some cases, internal council criticism of women's initiatives suggested that they represented the interests of 'organised' women of the WLM, not 'real' women (Button, 1984, Stokes, 1998) which is ironic given my earlier discussion of the WLM's attitude to organising. This issue of authentic identity and interests to be represented also mirrors Lynne Segal's complaint in 1979 that 'organised' socialist women dominated over libertarians within the WLM (Segal, 1979). So we see the same negative association applied to formal organising by feminists and their opponents — in both cases as a means to undermine the legitimacy of political claims based around female and feminist identities. The initial rejection of particular forms of organising by the WLM in conjunction with a strong identity of sisterhood had taken on a new position; organising is now criticised as somehow antithetical to the identity of 'normal women'. I would argue that the recurrence of this topic in different contexts, and its operationalisation by different actors, reveals it to be a discourse about organising rather than a static material reality. Being formally organised is neither a 'good' nor a 'bad' thing, but in particular contexts it is put to work to delineate between types of feminists, feminists and women, and professionals and activists. This then has implications for the way in which we understand the history and trajectory of the WLM and feminist movement. As I will elaborate further using my data in the following chapters, the local government gender equality working has distinctive elements, as well as continuities with the feminist movement. It is possible to miss these if we use the criteria of organisational form or location too rigidly to define the boundaries of the feminist movement.

### *Municipal Feminism and the State*

For feminism, and municipal feminism in particular, the state has been an area of controversy. As discussed earlier, the WLM was known for its early critique of male dominated mainstream politics and the state (Randall, 1998). However, the movement in the UK also developed in close relation to the state, many activists were state employees, and a large part of the feminist agenda involved making demands of it (Franzway et al., 1989). The notion that feminists must make a stark choice to be inside

or outside the state remains pertinent (Kantola, 2006), despite as I mentioned earlier, research that suggests both insider and outsider engagement with the state can maximise a movement's impact. From the perspective of theory, it has long been argued that writing off the state leaves feminists missing out on a potentially creative arena (Randall, 1998). In addition to this there has been significant developments in the study and theorising of 'state feminism' (Mazur and Stetson, 1995, McBride and Mazur, 2010) where states are seen to act in a quasi-feminist manner. However, for the present study of state/feminist interactions *within* a differentiated nation state, state feminism is not the most appropriate framework. State feminism has tended to look at whole nations in comparison, such as the USA and UK — rather than considering the federal level. A decade before Randall was writing, Franzway et al very clearly enunciated the need for a more nuanced theory of the state (Franzway et al., 1989). They argued that without theory, practical action is vulnerable to isolation from other issues and other groups, and potentially negative unintended consequences. Without theory, implicit assumptions can also go unchecked.

For the present examination of the WLM, municipal feminism and equalities in the local state, we need a nuanced understanding of the state as internally differentiated (Franzway et al., 1989). This is also evident when we consider the four nations and different levels of government held within the UK. Seeking to understand different feminist perspectives on the state, the ways in which they have sought to work within it, and the divergent outcomes of this interaction, it can be tempting to use a single theoretical approach. However, it is useful to draw on multiple approaches. For example, a liberal theory regarding the potential neutrality of the state, or a radical perspective regarding it as singularly patriarchal — will not be able to capture the dynamic and variable nature of the state and its relationship with feminism. This is valuable for my examination of municipal feminism. Hence I draw on approaches that synthesise poststructuralist insights with understandings from different feminist theories (Kantola, 2006). This approach requires recognising the state as plural rather than singular, a complex set of institutions, agencies and discourses (Franzway et al., 1989, Watson, 1992, Randall, 1998, Kantola, 2006). From this perspective, the united appearance of the state is regarded as a practical accomplishment, limited yet constantly being renewed (Franzway et al., 1989). This understanding enables recognition of the existence of contradictory and competing discourses and practices within the state,

which is needed in this examination of its relationship with feminism. In order to address criticisms which have been leveled at this genre of poststructuralist understanding, it is useful to utilise this in tandem with an institutionalist approach to tie it firmly to the detailed material realities of relationships within the state and their effects. In addition to this, analysis can place the state within its broader historical context (Franzway et al., 1989, Kantola, 2006).

From this perspective the state is understood as gendered, standing in close relationship with the wider gender order (Franzway et al., 1989, Connell, 2002). However, the state also lies in a two-way relationship of co-construction with feminism (Kantola, 2006). Feminist discourses about the state set parameters for feminist engagement with it, and state responses. In conjunction with this, feminist discourses constructing women's subjectivity (for example as workers) can then be employed by the state. From this position we can argue that problematising women's subjectivity does not remove their agency, and indeed that dominant discourses and hierarchies are created by feminists as well as other actors (Kantola, 2006).

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has opened my consideration of the way in which feminist ideas have been mobilised through their shaping of decisions about sites and modes of organising. It has laid out the background of the Women's Liberation Movement in the UK, and discussed its organisation and multiple strands of identity. In doing so it explored the significance of its prefigurative organising practices for the way in which social movement theorists have characterised it. It also examined the ways in which different strands of feminist identity (such as radical, liberal or socialist) have informed the discussions and decisions within the WLM itself about how best to organise. In doing so I highlighted the way in which the ties between the two have from the outset not been straightforward. I argued for the need to recognise this in the face of accounts which can have a tendency to gloss the small, autonomous, non-hierarchical group as the singularly positive and defining feature of feminist activity during the 1970s. Similarly, I detailed the ambivalent positioning of the WLM in relation to the state as particularly challenging to some of the accounts of social movement theory. Social movement theorists from the US and Europe have tended to emphasise different qualities of

organising, for example the strategic or spontaneous, which arguably do not fully account for the activities and impact of the WLM or municipal feminism. I then went on to discuss the implications organising practices and relationship with the state had, and continue to have, for the way in which feminism is positioned in relation to professional working. Beginning to tease out the reasons for this I suggested that the two positions are not necessarily opposed. I go on to consider this question in later chapters in detail, using my data drawn from three case study sites of local government.

Noting the limited attention in the literature which has been given to the relationship between feminist identities and forms of organisation, professionalism, and the movement of feminists to work in non-feminist organisations, I highlighted the value of examining feminist working in local government as a way to consider these areas. I laid out the existing literature considering the development of municipal feminism in the UK during the 1980s, and my theoretical approach to the state. In doing so I argued that local government is an excellent arena in which to examine questions about the nature of feminist organising, where and how this can take place, and the boundaries between the feminist movement and the state.

In the following chapter I continue to move forward chronologically, discussing changes in local government and its gender equality working from the 1980s to the present, as well as work which has attempted to theorise feminists working within formal organisations of the state.

### 3. Local Government, Gender Equality, and Feminist Workers — 1980 to 2010

#### *Introduction*

The previous chapter considered literature dealing with the WLM and its organisation, as well as the development of municipal feminism and theories relating to social movements and the state. I highlighted the way in which different feminist ideas came to shape approaches to where and how to organise, and the implications this has had for how we understand feminist activism. Particularly, the idea of WLM ambivalence if not hostility towards the state and professional organising inform the relevance of examining local government gender equality working. As I am interested in considering the legacy of the WLM, following from this, this chapter moves forward in time towards the present day. I discuss literature addressing changes in council organisation more broadly during the 1980s. I then consider studies relating to contemporary local government gender equality working. In doing so I highlight what makes this a fruitful area of study, and lay the ground for my comparative historical analysis of local government gender equality working. I also connect this to work which attempts to map and theorise the occurrence of feminists in relation to formal organisations of the state. These concepts, including the femocrat, have often been seen to coincide with a decline in feminism as a social movement, so I will also examine work which assesses the contemporary feminist movement in the UK. In light of this I suggest that local government gender equality work, and the individuals that carry it out require renewed consideration.

#### *Council Equalities Work: Legislation and Reorganisation*

In the 1980s the legislation relating to equality between men and women applying to councils was the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Equal Pay Act 1970 (Donnelly, 1985). These were intended to provide a legal framework within which progress could be made towards equality between women and men, particularly in employment. Since 1975 this basic statutory framework has been supplemented by case law, and the Equal Pay Act has been widened to include the concept of equal pay for work of equal value. These have been significant for local authorities as employers of large numbers of

women. However, the efficacy of this legislation has also been questioned. For example, in his account of the UK as a ‘reluctant legislator’ in relation to equal opportunities, Forbes suggested that rushed legislation was passed in order to please the EU (Forbes, 1989). There are also mixed accounts of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). Although Cynthia Cockburn recounts the utility of the EOC in her oral history interview (Cockburn, 2012), Forbes suggested that it remained under-used and had commissioners without relevant experience and seen as politically safe.

In this nationally reluctant context Lovenduski characterised local authorities as among the best, ‘innovators in the field of equal opportunities policy’ (Lovenduski, 1989: 16), suggesting they have, ‘been in the front line of implementation and are the site of many instances of good practice’ (Lovenduski, 1989). Interestingly, she pre-dates this to the advent of equal opportunities and women’s initiatives, highlighting the development of ad hoc race equality policies from the 1950s onwards. This was then built on by the 1976 Race Relations Act which placed a duty on local authorities to promote racial equality. Although legislation on race equality was first introduced to the UK in 1965, similarly to women’s initiatives there is not a great deal of research specifically addressing race equality initiatives in local government (see for example Nanton, 1984, Ball and Solomos, 1990, Saggar, 1991, Bagilhole, 1994, Thomas and Krishnarayan, 1994). This in itself is a fascinating topic of study closely linked to that of gender, and it would be fruitful to look across the different strands of equality in tandem. However, the necessity of limiting the scope of this thesis has meant it focuses on gender.

Coyle too has highlighted the central role local government has played in equalities developments. She suggests that by 1982 a third of London councils had some sort of equal opportunities policy (Coyle, 1989). Between 1982 and 1987, over 200 local authorities adopted policies related to women’s equality (Coyle, 1989). We should note, however, that although the female local government workforce had grown significantly (along with increasing numbers of female councillors) women remained concentrated in lower paid jobs and positions. Coyle also linked this to the fact that although women made up 52% of the membership of the National Association of Local Government Officers (the main white collar union) — they were only 13% of its full time officials.

Although equal opportunity as an idea was generally accepted, this agreement didn’t extend to definitions of equal opportunity policies, or to the manner of their



implementation (Forbes, 1989). It seems that there was considerable variation in the content and form of equal opportunities developed, and organisational structures through which they had been implemented (Coyle, 1989). The ideal strategy would roughly involve investigation of the problems, implementation of policy/procedure, evaluation and review (Forbes, 1989). Coyle's own conclusions in 1989 were that the achievements of policies had been limited, lacking adequate resources for implementation, managerial/political support, and adequate mechanisms for accountability (Coyle, 1989). Policies were also predominantly oriented towards internal employment practice — seen as a legitimate area for action — rather than service provision (although this might be contradicted by some of the research on women's initiatives). She suggested equal opportunities had been developed and contained within the status quo — limiting its capacity for concrete change. For example, moves towards flexible working had not been allowed to challenge the 'hard' managerial style of local government. To consider this from the perspective of gender mainstreaming theory, to which I will come, I would argue this describes the absence of 'visioning' — deemed to be central to the development of new ways of working that would facilitate greater equality between men and women. In chapters five and six I examine the practice and conceptualisation of equality and mainstreaming taking place in my three council sites, looking in detail at how this has taken place and developed since the inception of the women's initiatives.

Publishing in the same year as Coyle, Joni Lovenduski has also discussed the problems facing those seeking to develop equal opportunities within local councils (Lovenduski, 1989). She suggested that many local authorities had taken up defensive positions — following negative publicity, resistance from local groups, fiscal restraint and loss of control of certain areas. Thus, although some writers are keen to point to progress made by councils, it also seems that by the end of the 1980s equal opportunities remained controversial. Thus it is perhaps unsurprising that there was evidently considerable confusion amongst those involved (i.e. managers, practitioners, the general public) (Lovenduski, 1989) as to what equal opportunities actually meant or entailed. I would further add to this that there was also confusion and debate around 'equal opportunities' and related concepts within the academic literature in this period. Lovenduski discussed the problematic roots of equal opportunity being based on liberal notions of merit-based

competition. This is limited from a feminist perspective, failing to recognise the impact of longstanding structural disadvantage and systemic discrimination.

On the other hand, Forbes schematised three main approaches to equal opportunities, ranging from the liberal conception critiqued by Lovenduski, to the notion of equal outcome (Forbes, 1989). However, we might revise several elements of his schematisation. Firstly, the notion that liberal equality requires *sameness* of treatment (i.e. identical). Secondly, the rigid opposition of positive discrimination and liberal conceptions of justice. In terms of implementation, there are also examples of equal opportunities being used from an individualistic perspective of identical treatment to close down women only services, such as youth groups (Spence, 2010). This fails to recognise the socio-historical context which led to the development of the legislation in the first place. Spence also criticises the depoliticisation of feminist equalities language on entry into council usage, suggesting it is ‘professionalised’.<sup>4</sup> Chapter six of this thesis engages with the ways in which the understanding of gender equality has shifted since the municipal feminist era, addressing my research question that asks how contemporary gender equality working compares to municipal feminism conceptually.

### *Gender Equality*

The development of thinking and practice around gender equality has been informed by the concept of gender — of course an even broader field. In the context of this thesis gender features in my analysis in several ways. Firstly, it is a structuring feature of organisational, institutional and state theory. In this sense it plays a role in my understanding and analysis of women’s initiatives, councils and the state. Secondly, the notion of gender is conveyed through gender equality (and equal opportunity) discourses and practices. In this sense the changing construction of gender, how it is employed, and its material effects will be examined in the specific context of local councils in the UK.

Gender equality is itself a changing concept. In the context of the women’s movement, women’s initiatives and the subsequent developments in council equalities working, we

---

<sup>4</sup> Without rejecting the point Spence is making about depoliticisation, it is also worth considering her use of ‘professional’ as the automatic negation of ‘feminist’. The question of whether the two are reconcilable links back to my earlier discussion of WLM antipathy towards professional working.

can track and recognise the significance of negotiations and shifts in the conceptualisation of gender equality. As with a feminist institutionalist framework, change can be seen as resulting from a mixture of intended and unintended consequences of multiple levels of organisation and practice. Even within the academic field of gender studies there is overt disagreement as well as conceptual ambiguity and slippage in the use of the term (Braidotti, 2002b). Despite gender equality being a common research topic, there is often disagreement about how to define and interpret it (Hoeber, 2007). This is particularly problematic as power is enacted through the way in which people understand this and act on it (Ely and Meyerson, 2000). Accordingly feminists have long been interested in the theoretical and practical consequences of equality as a strategy (Franzway et al., 1989).

Lombardo et al., (2009) usefully refer to this arena as the discursive politics of gender equality. They conceptualise gender equality policies as social constructions where issues of gender equality and inequality get their meaning through framing processes articulated by different actors. They highlight discursive processes of shrinking, fixing, stretching and bending, as ways of understanding the changing nature of equality in a policy context. In this thesis examining the developing equalities architecture of local councils, this provides conceptual tools for thinking in detail not just about policy, but programmes and structures created around different understandings of gender equality. It is also advantageous that in examining changing understandings of gender equality, I include concepts ranging from 'women's issues' to 'diversity', and 'equal opportunities' to 'gender mainstreaming'. Academics, politicians, policy makers, managers and practitioners have developed and adopted this terminology at varying rates from the 1980s onwards. I group them together here as they describe ways of understanding and addressing inequality, between women and men, and between other social delineations such as ethnicity and socio-economic status.

Critical frame analysis, rather than seeing policy as an intentional and rational process of selection, assumes that unintentional frames affecting the representation of problems and solutions enter the policy process (Lombardo and Meier, 2009). From this standpoint policy problems are constructed from a mixture of intentional and unintentional elements. However, policy makers, activists and researchers are often trapped within their own frames, and can unconsciously reproduce particular hegemonic understandings of gender equality. Research needs to attempt reflexivity on this issue,

as well as accounting for the different material power bases of actors involved, which I seek to do.

Analysing gender equality policies, Lombardo and Meier suggest that inconsistencies can provide discursive windows of opportunity for creative or expansive definitions. However, discursive processes can equally work to depoliticise and narrow the meaning gender equality, which they argue lessens its ability to challenge existing power dynamics. This is pertinent to consider in the context of council equalities work in the UK. I seek to examine how discursive processes have molded gender equality over time, how this relates to feminism as a social movement, and the practical implications of this.

### *Organisational Developments in Local Government*

In addition to the development of equal opportunities policies and procedures relating to gender during the 1980s, local councils also underwent significant organisational changes (Halford and Savage, 1995, Exworthy and Halford, 1999). These had implications for the ways in which equalities and women's initiatives could be conceived and implemented. In 1983 Hinings highlighted both fiscal crisis and government ideology leading to changes in the organisation and management of local councils (Hinings, 1983). These included freezing recruitment, eventually leading to the need to reorganise in order to plug 'holes' within the organisation. He reports this taking place using directorate structures — where council functions are grouped together, and the role and activities of chief executives are re-evaluated (Hinings, 1983). Such dramatic reorganisation could potentially have been an opportunity for the introduction of new, better integrated women's initiatives — considering they disrupt hierarchy and departmental structures. For example, Hinings discusses the development of 'executive offices' within councils as a modification of the chief executive's role, which would have been an ideal position for women's initiatives given the suggestions of research on women's initiatives discussed earlier. However with limited funding for such innovation it is debatable how effective this would have been.

Introduced at the beginning of the 1980s, compulsory competitive tendering (CCT) also impacted on the organisation of local councils, and on their ability to maintain equal

opportunities policies and practice in relation to employment. This initiative was introduced first in local government, seeking to release services from direct public provision and improve their cost effectiveness (Dickens, 1997). CCT has been shown to disproportionately affect female workers, as they suffered deteriorating employment conditions and terms. The majority of services selected for CCT were also dominated by women. Ultimately, there was minimal consideration given to equality issues in the process of implementing CCT, Dickens suggesting that:

There is an unacknowledged contradiction in public policy in seeking women's employment equality through anti-discrimination legislation, guidance and exhortation, while simultaneously undermining this goal in other areas of economic, legal and social policy (Dickens, 1997: 180).

Another organisational change introduced by central government was the abolition of the metropolitan county councils, including the GLC. Seeking to evaluate the impact of this process Leach and Davis stressed the difficulty of measuring efficiency and service provision at all (Leach and Davis, 1990). They did suggest that evidence made it seem, 'highly unlikely that increases in service quality or efficiency have taken place' (Leach and Davis, 1990: 11). They also pointed to the way the reorganisation effectively redefined the political status of a tier of government — rather than removing it (as was claimed). This was arguably part of attempts to reduce the power of local councils in relation to central government in a reaction against municipal socialism (Travers, 1990) and feminism.

### *Contemporary Developments: Municipal Feminism, Local Government Equalities and the Women's Movement*

The previous chapter discussed literature considering the WLM in the UK, as well as work relating to women's council initiatives, and this chapter has so far considered the development of council equalities and organisation from the 1980s. I now move to discuss recent literature concerning contemporary manifestations of gender equality working and the feminist movement.

There is not a great deal of work discussing women's initiatives from the early 1990s onwards. An exception is Wendy Stokes' article using data compiled by the Women's

Local Authority Network (formerly the National Association of Local Government Women's Committees) in 1995 (Stokes, 1998). Stokes suggests there were just four full women's committees and nine sub-committees, but it is not clear if this includes regions outside England. It would also be useful to understand the extent to which equal opportunities initiatives existed at this period, given accounts suggest many women's committees were subsumed into them. Stokes discusses women's committees as a democratising force, and reflects on many of the issues relating to their successful and problematic elements discussed in earlier literature. For example, she analyses arguments around the representativeness of co-optees, levels of committee organisation, and attempts of initiatives to engage widely with their local community. Positively, she reports that councillors felt their understanding of local and women's issues had been improved by the presence of the co-optees. However, this was tempered by frustration felt by co-optees at not being adequately integrated into, and knowledgeable about, council proceedings.

Rather than examining women's initiatives specifically, Welsh and Halcli's 2003 study investigates the meanings of feminism to female councillors in England (Welsh and Halcli, 2003). Their findings have implications for the types of initiatives related to gender equality that councillors would be willing to support or develop today. For example, they found individualistic discourses were central to the councillors' multiple understandings of 'equal opportunity'. They found a reluctance among their subjects to organise formally with other women, and an absence of politicised gender identities. However, they did find the presence of a new feminist discourse among those who tried to link feminist and political identities (Welsh and Halcli, 2003). The complexity and confusion around the meaning of equal opportunity, as I recounted earlier, was evident in Welsh and Halcli's interviews with councillors. Although all expressed firm support for this term, there were a range of interpretations of it, and ideas of how to achieve it (Welsh and Halcli, 2003). For many, feminism was even seen as in opposition to equal opportunity and justice. They suggest that although advocating women's full participation in public life, the councillors didn't question the public/private dichotomy, or men's lack of engagement with the private sphere. Considering women's initiatives or women's organising, Welsh and Halcli argue that the councillors saw organising in their capacity as women to be contrary to their role as responsible to all their constituents. They also feared marginalisation and the majority showed little support for

women's committees. This is informative when considering what it is possible to implement today in relation to furthering gender equality. Of course this analysis can also be productively situated within a broader understanding of neoliberalism. In particular neoliberalism as a mentality of government and the type of subject it engenders (Rose, 1992). That is, subjects focused on individual self-government and were profoundly limited in their capacity to think in terms of collective and structural factors.

Taking a wider, comparative view of women in relation to local government, Sylvia Bashevkin has examined dimensions of women's representation in contemporary London and Toronto (Bashevkin, 2006). She uses council office-holding, the development of municipal femocracy and the consideration of women in urban planning texts, as measures of women's representation. This reflects positively on the Greater London Assembly (GLA) which was created after Labour's election in 1997, the GLC having been abolished in 1986. However, she does suggest that women's representation in bureaucratic planning terms declined between the end of the GLC and beginning of the GLA. Bashevkin's argument for the importance of a robust femocracy in the late GLC that remained in the GLA, relates to the questions of legacy and influence which this thesis considers in relation to different councils in the UK. In doing so I build on the work which has already taken place in this area. In her book Bashevkin equates the municipal feminist initiatives with femocracies. This is a term I consider in relation to my own data in chapter eight, arguing that we should regard these local government gender equality workers as professional feminists.

### *Legislation, Organisation and Management*

In addition to work discussing women's initiatives in local government, and the individuals involved in this, scholars have also examined more recent developments in equalities legislation, initiatives and council organisation. This has included recent developments in equalities legislation (for example McLaughlin, 2007, Squires, 2009), including the 2010 Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty (Fredman, 2011, Hand et al., 2012). Legislation addressing gender inequality has affected organisations in the UK, including councils (Halford and Leonard, 2001). There is some literature discussing this legislation in different contexts, such as health, religion and education

(for example Branney, 2012, Clucas, 2012, Lewis et al., 2012, Lockwood et al., 2012). However, there is relatively little focusing specifically on this in relation to gender and local government, including the actual rather than possible impact of the Gender Equality Duty (GED). Of relevance here is Diane Richardson and Surya Monro's study of sexualities equality in local government (Richardson and Monro, 2013). Conley and Page's work also contributes to this area, suggesting that gender equality is not seen as a priority by public authorities or the general public (Howard and Tibballs, 2003, Conley and Page, 2010). They found that equalities practitioners in local government were worried that the further integration of equalities legislation (in the 2010 Equality Act) could actually further marginalise gender equality. Since their development in the 1980s, they suggest that the ideological underpinning of equal opportunities has shifted from a social justice, institutional framework, to a business case around mobilising individual difference.

Having undertaken research in five councils, Conley and Page found that the GED was not actually seen as the main driver of equality work by participants. Rather it served to legitimise initiatives started by managers. It was also used as a lever to get equalities into business plans and performance management criteria — arguably important ways of embedding equalities work into organisational practice. In addition to this, the practice of impact assessment was popular with officers. Conley and Page highlight the need for training, support and monitoring to ensure that integrating gender equality considerations does not turn them into tick box exercises without integrity and vision (Conley and Page, 2010). There is further work to be done in understanding the extent to which legislation impacts on the successful development and working of contemporary equalities initiatives. I contribute to this in chapter seven addressing my research question that asks what the significance of legislation is in driving and shaping gender equality working.

Gender mainstreaming as a method of working was developed in the 1980s and has subsequently become ubiquitous and influential. It was endorsed at the UN fourth world conference on women in Beijing 1995, and by the EU and UK government (Rees, 1999, Rees, 2002). Mainstreaming represents the idea that gender equality should be a consideration at all stages of policy making, implementation and evaluation (Rees, 1999). Mainstreaming as an approach recognizes that the present organisations, policies and practices of the state are not gender-neutral, contributing to the reproduction of



inequality. It moves from this to identify the need for radical structural change — rather than positive action which doesn't necessarily affect the underlying causes of inequality. Fully implemented it seeks to find and introduce alternative ways of organising work. This includes internal policies, practices, attitudes and external service provision. As part of this, it advocates the increased democratisation of working, including high quality consultation with groups experiencing disadvantage. To successfully implement gender mainstreaming it must be fully integrated within an organisation, with status and legitimacy, as well as adequate resources to carry this out. Of course, this is not to ignore the numerous critiques of gender mainstreaming, and problems related to its effective implementation. These include the dismantling of existing equalities structures and programmes, and the loss of those employed with specific equalities expertise (Rees, 1999, 2002). Indeed, similar theoretical and practical discussions have also taken place around the concepts of diversity mainstreaming and management. In examining gender equality working over time, chapters five and six of this thesis consider the extent to which gender mainstreaming has been shaped by, and has shaped work on this area in local government. In doing so I highlight ways in which discourses around gender and equality have been static, as well as reconfigured, in the decades following the WLM.

As during the 1980s, more recent changing norms of management and organisation within local government provide insight into the possibilities for, and reality of, equalities initiatives. Halford et al suggested during the 1990s that organisational restructuring had challenged traditional notions of male and female roles, and replaced gendered management and organisational discourses with an ostensibly gender neutral approach based on performativity (Halford et al., 1997, Kettle, 1998). Having said this, they add the caveat that although it may now be easier for women to move into senior positions, they remain concentrated in junior ones. Rather than a directly ascriptive gendered culture where hierarchy was legitimised by reference to sex roles, managers justify their position, pay and privilege in terms of their ability to carry out certain objectives (Halford et al., 1997). Thus values of competitiveness, specialist skill, dedication and getting things done have risen to the fore. Of course this may allow women to participate, but without affecting the relationship managers have between their work and home lives. Although gender has ceased to legitimate hierarchy, the implications of what constitutes a good manager remain tied to the traditionally male,

unattached worker without other commitments. Notably, Halford et al observe that where previously women were seen as uncommitted to their work, now they have shown that this is not the case, commitment (previously seen as part of the promotion criteria for senior positions) has now been downgraded (Halford et al., 1997).

The rise of performance-based management could be seen as beneficial to the project of integrating considerations of gender equality into council organisation. That is, if we acknowledge the importance of monitoring for the effective implementation of equalities policy and practice. However, Monro's discussion of how local government equalities work is evaluated raises questions about the feasibility of such a project (Monro, 2006). More broadly, Nancy Fraser has also pointed to the ways in which feminist and neoliberal agendas have in recent decades been partially aligned (Fraser, 2013). This highlights the ambivalence of developments in management and organisation in relation to gender equality working, and the need for careful consideration of the implications of different forms of organisation and practices.

While Halford et al suggested that management discourse had become less explicitly gendered, Monro has pointed out that this neutralisation sits in tension with those who would see the political nature of public sector equalities initiatives made explicit (Monro, 2006). Although she reports a move to frame equalities initiatives in administrative rather than political terms (something which is often seen as negative<sup>5</sup>) she points out that this can be a positive strategic move. Monro's examination of sexualities work in local government finds councils framing their development and measurement of this in administrative terms as a useful way of including a contested topic (Monro, 2006). This can be seen to contrast with the women's initiatives of the 1980s where political support was crucial to their development and continued existence. Although there is obviously scope to criticise contemporary equalities work as 'watered down' in comparison to the political aims of the WLM,<sup>6</sup> Monro's work strongly represents the utility and achievements of its more subtle, strategic working. Later chapters of this thesis engage with the practical realities of performance management within local government working on gender, and how it is situated in different councils. This is significant because as I discussed earlier, modes of organising work have been

---

<sup>5</sup> For example (Spence, 2010). This is also connected to the fears around co-optation of feminist aims by women's initiatives which I discussed earlier.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Kettle discusses an equal opportunities initiative in Leeds where some women on the Leeds women's committee criticise it as pandering to a patriarchal agenda (Kettle, 1998).

used as a focus for analysis by social movement theorists and those considering professional working on feminist issues.

### *Understanding Equalities Workers*

The position of those working towards feminist ends (however defined) within the state or other formal organisations has been, and remains contentious (Swann and Fox, 2010). As Jonathan Dean has pointed out, in the work which does exist in this area we are often, ‘not given much of a sense of the types of discourses and practices that are put to use by feminists working within state institutional apparatus’ (Dean, 2010: 29). This thesis aims to do just this.

To consider *who* equalities workers are, and how we can best conceptualise them in relation to social movements, useful work has been undertaken in relation to the idea of the femocrat. Hester Eisenstein has been a key thinker in relation to this concept, which she defines as a feminist bureaucrat (Eisenstein, 1995, 1996). Franzway et al. describe it as a feminist bureaucrat working within the state (Franzway et al., 1989). This is relevant to my examination of local government gender equality workers and their contradictory position, and indeed Halford and Leonard in 2001 refer to women’s initiative workers as femocrats (Halford and Leonard, 2001). Franzway et al link this ambivalent position to (particular juridico-discursive) understandings of power where, as feminists see women as oppressed, their occupying positions of power becomes contradictory. Feminists may want to access this power, but also see it as an erosion of their ideals.

Using the example of Australia, Eisenstein argues against feminist approaches which see the state and/or bureaucratic organising as fundamentally anti-feminist (for example Ferguson, 1984). Rather than defending bureaucratic organisation per se, Eisenstein suggests positive changes can be won for women in this way. Although outsider and insider working can easily be dichotomised, as I discussed earlier in the context of the UK WLM — many writers suggest that both are constructive in working towards feminist aims. Eisenstein defends femocrats, using interview data to suggest that the individuals involved feel they follow issues which affect the majority rather than an

elite of women, or in order to further their own careers.<sup>7</sup> She also suggests that her interviewees feel checked by an individual feminist conscience (Eisenstein, 1995). In addition to this Eisenstein argues that women's units within the government of Australia have acted as training grounds on issues relating to women and on how to negotiate bureaucratic organisation. However, she also suggests that this function is being undermined as the women involved are no longer directly related to the women's movement. These points are worth considering in relation to local government equality workers in the UK, and in chapter eight I go on to discuss whether or not 'femocrat' is an adequate descriptor for them.

Chappell, writing after Eisenstein in 2002, suggests that although femocrats have made positive achievements, 'on its own this strategy is insufficient for improving representation at either a nominal or substantive level' (Chappell, 2002: 85). Comparing the working of femocrats in the UK, Australia and Canada, the UK does not fare particularly well. Chappell suggests this is partly the result of the strong tendency within the UK WLM to be suspicious of the state (Chappell, 2002). This is clearly plausible in light of my earlier consideration of the early WLM. Again, as I mentioned earlier, this has also arguably led to a smaller literature on the notion of 'state feminism' from a UK perspective than is evident in Australia or the USA.<sup>8</sup> A theoretical development which has sought to throw light on the antagonism between some feminist thinking and particular conceptions of the state utilises poststructuralist thought. Watson has challenged the notion of the state as a monolithic organisation serving clear interests, instead conceptualising it as a set of arenas and collection of practices (historically produced not structurally given) (Watson, 1992). This mirrors my earlier discussion of the utility in approaching local government and the feminist movement with a variegated account of the state.

---

<sup>7</sup> Relatedly, the extent to which female MPs in Westminster felt they represented women's interests has been examined (Childs, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Key examples in this area include Mazur and Stetson's 'Comparative State Feminism' which examines the ways in which state structures contribute to the formation of feminist policy and provide access for the women's movement to the political process (Mazur and Stetson, 1995). Of course their framing of terminology is central to their ability to designate the UK state at least partially 'feminist' – which could be disputed. In the context of my research, council women's initiatives could be seen to illustrate some elements of state feminism. Another earlier example of a US scholar examining feminism in relation to the state also argues that the government has played a role in building the US women's movement (Duerst-Lahti, 1989). Particularly interesting here is the notion that government can play a key role in legitimising feminist issues for the non-feminist (majority) population. If women's equality is presently seen by many in the UK as a non-issue, this legitimising role of official organisations could arguably be more important than it was previously.

In her evaluation of UK femocratic practice, Chappell points out that central government structures established to address women's equality have not been wildly effective. In addition to this, her interview data reveals that women working within the UK women's unit (later women and equality, and equalities unit) do not feel able to be open about their feminist politics. Thus it appears that at central government level (akin to the research discussed earlier on female councillors) it is a struggle to get an open hearing for feminist ideas. Chappell suggests that local government women's initiatives operated along femocratic lines but does not deal with this in as much detail as she does the national level (Chappell, 2002). She suggests that future opportunities for feminist intervention in the UK could be improving with the advent of devolved regional governments. This supports the need for work to examine the different trajectories of equalities working within the UK, including local government which this study contributes to.

Other scholarship on the interaction between feminist activists, femocrats and the process of devolution takes up Chappell's point. For example, Charles has explored how a new gendering of political and discursive opportunity structures from the Welsh Assembly, has affected social policy and the ability of social movements to influence it (Charles, 2004). She concludes that although new opportunities have been created, there are also constraints that work to marginalise more radical feminist voices. Dubrowolsky has explored the interventions women have made into the process of devolution in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Dobrowolsky, 2002). She suggests that identity-based politics have been used strategically to good effect, rather than having a purely exclusionary impact. It has also been argued that the women's movement has had a significant impact on the shaping of new constitutional structures. Busby and MacLeod have explored the effects of the increased number of female members in the Scottish parliament (Busby and MacLeod, 2002). This presented a mixed picture, suggesting some laudable aims and attempts to move towards more family-friendly working arrangements. However, they also suggest that there are numerous areas still requiring firm action, and that the failure to allow MPs to job-share illustrates the lack of a serious rethinking of the way politics takes place. This area of research serves to address questions both about different relationships between women's movements, parties and states, and about the strategic use of politicised change.

Despite the insights developed by existing research, we might still question how easily ‘femocrat’ includes those working to modify and change bureaucracies, or those not working in bureaucratic ways. We could also ask how well it applies given changes in the institutions and organisation of the state, as well as theories about it. How well does it apply outside of the USA and Australia where it has predominantly been applied? How appropriate is it for individuals who don’t identify personally with feminism? Answers to all of these questions are beyond the scope of this thesis, but point to the need for further work beyond my research specifically on local government. The issues raised suggest we could draw on other ways of understanding the identities and actions of equality workers, even if the spaces in which they operate have initially been constituted as a ‘femocracy’. In seeking to explore the legacy of women’s initiative work and workers we need to be open to new ways of understanding — how this might operate, whether it relates explicitly to feminism, and whether or not this matters. I explore this in detail in chapter eight, suggesting we should describe local government gender equality workers that identify with feminism as ‘professional feminists’. I distinguish them from femocrats as occupying a mid-space between social movement and state, working to challenge the organisational structures and institutions they operate within as paid professionals. They utilise their feminist knowledge of gender inequality in this way in order to bring about practical change in the lives of those served by the council.

Another concept related to this area of study is that of the policy entrepreneur (Kingdon, 1995), who invests a great deal of energy into developing, positioning and advocating for a proposal. Kingdon stresses the importance of connecting issues, policy problems and political events for this role. Katzenstein has examined this sort of idea in the context of women in the US church and military (Katzenstein, 1998). This includes a greater element of strategy and leadership than in the femocrat’s working, as well as extending beyond the political realm. To some extent this could better reflect changes in management and organisation that have been theorised as new public management (Swann and Fox, 2010). However it also fits with broader feminist theorising about agency as involving strategic, creative and intuitive action in relation to institutions (Mackay, 2011) and the state (Kantola, 2006). This recognises the complex position of equalities workers, and their reflexive engagement with this.

Adding further to this discussion of emerging positions around gender equalities working, Page has suggested five ways in which leadership operates in relation to implementing the Gender Equality Duty (Page, 2011). These are 1) designing processes of regulation, 2) changing the discourse of equality from political advocacy to service improvement, 3) outsourcing advocacy to independent organisations and consultants, 4) building networks to sustain leadership, 5) skills of translation: coaching managers to engage with regulatory processes and achieve results in practice. This is a useful point of reference for the present study of council equalities working.

Even in the context of changing feminist and managerial values, conflicts between the two continue to present challenges to the leadership of gender equality initiatives. It requires sophisticated relational and political skills to sustain collaboration between the two (Page, 2003, 2009). In addition to this, understandings of what it means to operate as a professional feminist need to remain situated within wider discourses of gender equality, institutions and power relations. Meyerson and Scully's notion of 'tempered radicalism' also speaks to this idea of individuals seeking to make change within the boundaries of their organisational position and context (Meyerson and Scully, 2003). This is relevant to describing the subtle operation of municipal feminists, or contemporary gender equality workers seeking change, particularly as 'tempering' suggests both malleability and resilience, arguably characteristic of feminist thinking.

Page suggests that equalities workers collaborating with external networks of advocates/organisations is an important mechanism (Page, 2011). This serves to depoliticise their own work, while outsourcing rather than discarding its political content. Thinking back to social movement theory and the previous chapter, this could be a new dimension of collaboration between insider and outsider working. In the present work I aim to closely consider these lines between insider and outsider, political and apolitical.

Further to these possible understandings of where 'professional' and 'feminist' intersect, it is also important to consider how this position itself as problematic to theorise and inhabit may be important. For example, Singleton and Michael (1993) — in the context of a cervical screening programme — have highlighted the way that the ambivalent positioning of its actors worked to render it durable. Medical practitioners were simultaneously supportive and critical of the programme, insiders and outsiders,

but they were working through this position to sustain it. This acknowledges that practice cannot be entirely consistent and coherent as theory can be. This significance of ambivalent positioning is applicable to the notion of the ‘professional feminist’ I go on to develop.

Rosi Braidotti’s development of an account of the ‘nomadic’ subject pushes further to envisage a decentred, multi-layered vision of the subject as something valuable (Braidotti, 2002a). She positions this dynamic and changing subject as a way of situating the self as an ‘outsider within’ (Braidotti, 2002a: 5). This is helpful in the present attempt to theorise a professional feminist space and subjectivity. Braidotti’s insistence on nomadism as a component of becoming rather than as a rhetorical device, reminds us of the prefigurative practices of earlier feminists, where living and enacting ideals was crucially important. This seems to reach to the heart of what the WLM and more recent attempts to theorise and enact modes of change have necessitated — a creative, imaginative dimension. This way of thinking can perhaps interrupt the tendency to think about the WLM and feminism as divided into different schools. Instead we can regard it as a project with material, political, cultural and imaginative dimensions — that work more effectively when connected. For example, earlier discussions highlighted the perennial need for creative ‘visioning’ as part of attempts to change gendered patterns of inequality, whether in women’s initiatives or named as gender mainstreaming. This is useful as I seek to analyse the significance of municipal feminism, more recent local government working, and how it connects to the WLM and broader feminist movement.

In Braidotti’s account this imaginary is explored in the possibility of the becoming subject where, ‘the space of becoming is one of dynamic marginality’ (Braidotti, 2002a: 78). Seeking to develop an account of this subject within a positive casting of difference, the notion of becoming takes place in the in-between, intervals and transitions between differences. This vision of the subject could shed light on the multiple and conflicted position of the professional feminist which I develop in chapter eight. In addition to this, the concern with the subject as a process of becoming also resonates with the processual accounts of gender and institutions I have discussed so far.



*Organised Enough, or Too Much to be a Movement?*

Having examined the literature on post-1980s developments in council equalities work, its organisation, and the individuals involved in it, I now turn to discuss the feminist movement since the Women's Liberation Movement.

Defining the boundaries of a 'movement' is difficult and contested (MacKay, 2008), as I return to discuss in later chapters. Reviewing the literature on this topic I selected work which defined itself as being about feminist and/or women's activism and movements, wishing to avoid becoming embroiled in debates about 'waves' of feminism, their existence, current status or definition.

There has been a commonly painted picture of the WLM's trajectory as flourishing during the 1960s and 1970s, to increasing fragmentation, dissipation and de-radicalisation in the Thatcher era (MacKay, 2008). In conjunction with this, numerous writers have documented women's rejection of feminism as an identifier (Jowett, 2004, McRobbie, 2009, Scharff, 2012). Welsh and Halcli (2003) have suggested that ideas about patriarchy and oppression from the WLM seem out of sync with some women's sense of autonomy and individual power. It seems plausible that professional women would be particularly likely to feel this way, particularly in the context of neoliberalism. We might speculate to what extent this could have been different if the idea of professionalism had not been positioned so antithetically to the activism of the WLM.

In Australia Everingham et al have provided an account of women who no longer see sex as a constraint on their choices (Everingham et al., 2007). They suggest that women take gender equality for granted, seeing constraints on their ability to balance work and family as the result of their individual situations rather than a structural issue. In fact many take this further to blame feminism, seeing it as insisting that women must take on too much and undertake paid work. In their research, professional women felt that feminism had failed to change men's input into home life. Working class women complained that feminism meant they had to work even when they only wanted to be mothers. In addition to this, the theorising of post-feminism (McRobbie, 2004a, McRobbie, 2004b, Gill, 2007, McRobbie, 2009) in conjunction with the rise of neoliberalism (Walkerdine, 2003, Brown, 2003, Thorsen and Lie, 2006) has been a significant element in a generally pessimistic outlook on the state of contemporary feminist activism.

MacKay suggested in 2008 that feminist activism has continued largely through institutional mobilisation (which women's council initiatives could exemplify). The paradox suggested by Mackay is that the WLM's apparent decline:

coincided with the growth of women's involvement in, and impact on, the mainstream politics and political agenda of political parties, trade unions, and governments at different levels (MacKay, 2008: 17).

MacKay suggests that changing political opportunity structures mean it is necessary to revisit the role and impact of organised women and their interactions with conventional politics. She uses the notion of 'organised women' to negotiate the definition of movement constitution. Writing before this, Threlfall supports the notion of the increasing entry of feminism into mainstream politics and institutions (Threlfall, 1996). She argues that despite early misgivings about working within or with other political organisations, engaging with the mainstream has not led to dependence or absorption. MacKay adds to this the suggestion that WLM hostility towards the state has been overplayed (MacKay, 2008). It seems surprising then that Threlfall suggests the movement strategy of using existing institutions, 'whether understood as institutionalisation or mainstreaming' (Threlfall, 1996: 290) was, and remains disparaged by some. Mainstreaming gender has a particular meaning — as an organisational strategy used to introduce considerations and ways of working that aim to increase gender equality (which I discuss in greater detail later). It seems important to distinguish this analytically from a more general movement of feminists or feminist ideas into institutions even if the two are related. Regardless of the terminology Threlfall argues for the utility of this sort of insider working as complementary to more 'conventional' activism. A novel issue raised by Threlfall regarding future directions of women's organising is their lack of attention so far given to the open market (Threlfall, 1996). Organised women have dedicated time successfully to making demands of the state, and Threlfall assents that this is not likely to stop being an important area for action. However, for those who do seek to make change beyond this she suggests there is potential for much more engagement with the private sector, particularly in today's globalized economy, with cross fertilisation moving globally from East to West and South to North. Initiatives such as micro-finance and women's banking are examples of this sort of intervention outside the state. We might want to consider how feminism does or could relate to the private sector.

Trying to pin down the status of the UK feminist movement, MacKay utilises examples of diversity within the four nations to challenge the idea of unified decline (MacKay, 2008). She suggests that:

territory and level are significant in understanding the form and trajectory of contemporary women's movements, their identities and their strategic engagement with conventional power politics (MacKay, 2008: 18).

This is especially relevant given the gains made by women in the context of regional politics relative to Westminster. For example, as mentioned earlier, Scotland highlights the importance of territorially specific political opportunity structures (if utilising social movement theory's terminology). Mackay discusses the ways in which Scottish activists have engaged in 'multiple militancy'; being involved in women's organisations and activities as well as with mainstream political organisations (MacKay, 2008). She argues this resulted in their success with regard to the organisation of the Scottish parliament and the number of female representatives elected. This further supports the argument for the symbiosis of different approaches to women's organising or activism. In addition to this, Mackay suggests that women in Scotland and Wales had a sense of being hit hardest during the cuts of the 1980s compared to those in the South, that fuelled grievance and facilitated mobilisation. It is also pertinent that women's activism in Scotland has led to significant progress on domestic violence policy and funding in comparison to England. As the issue of male violence was often seen as a primary issue for radical feminists, it is striking that this should then have been such a success in the context of mainstream politics. This arguably represents an example of the plural and interwoven nature of the relationship between feminist identities and organising practices I put forward in the previous chapter. This mobilisation has also had important legacies in Scotland, Mackay highlighting the greater priority given to gender mainstreaming compared to England. Related to this, chapters five and six of this thesis consider how work on gender equality has been conceptualised and developed in local government.

Although Mackay suggested in 2008 that there was little empirical research examining the contemporary feminist movement in the UK, the past few years have seen a growth in just such scholarship. This has documented a rise in visible feminist activism (Dean, 2010, Redfern and Aune, 2010), including organisations, events, and media outputs

(Predelli et al., 2008, Dean, 2010, Redfern and Aune, 2010, Walter, 2010). As well as popular writing on the subject of feminism (Banyard, 2010, Walter, 2010, Moran, 2011), there have also been academic studies of activism (Lambert and Parker, 2006, WASS Collective, 2007, Long, 2011, Baily, 2012). This represents the great diversity which has and continues to exist (Haan et al., 2013), including new forms of activity, for example facilitated by the internet (Keller, 2012, Schuster, 2013). In addition to this, it has been debated for some time whether or not a ‘third wave’ or even ‘forth wave’ of feminism exists, and if so how this should be defined — which reflects its existence as an unfixed concept (Dean, 2009, Budgeon, 2011).

Thus a mixed picture exists in terms of the contemporary feminist movement. On the one hand narratives of decline, institutionalisation and deradicalisation have been prominent since the 1980s. Alongside this too has been the continued documentation of general public hostility to the idea of feminism and the theorising of post-feminism. Yet there has also been the sustenance of feminist work in academia, and debates over the nature of feminism including its ‘waves’. Moreover the past few years have seen the narrative of decline being challenged by empirical work documenting feminist activism, as well as considering how this is viewed in relation to the history of the women’s movement.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has moved chronologically forward from the 1980s to review developments in the theorising of gender equality and its practical enactment in local government. I have also discussed research examining local government, gender equality working, and feminist activism in the decades since the 1980s. Local government has been acknowledged as a significant area for the development of gender equality working, yet this chapter has highlighted the need for an examination of this discursive and practical space over time. I have laid the ground for my own consideration of municipal feminism and its present day equivalent, and how we can best understand it in relation to the WLM and feminist activism more broadly. Considering the development of equalities work in local government, I discussed work which has looked at the different ways in which equality has been conceived of and practically applied. In addition to this I reviewed work which sketched out the broader

changes that have taken place in the organisation of local government, the development of gender mainstreaming, and the contemporary literature on council gender equality work specifically. Alongside this I considered critical frame analysis as a useful way of examining the discursive politics of gender equality — the ways in which gender is stretched, bent, shrunk and fixed in the process of policy making and enactment. This contributes to the aim of this thesis to explore the relationship between feminist ideas and their practical implementation. Lastly, I discussed work considering the contemporary feminist movement, and attempts to theorise the position of those working on feminist issues in ways which do not conform to the traditional account of activism. This provides the backdrop for my analysis in chapter eight where I develop the idea of the ‘professional feminist’ to describe council gender equality workers. In doing so I show both their continuity with, and specific contribution to, the feminist movement, complicating the traditional picture of where and how feminist activity should take place, and the boundaries between movement and state.

The current and previous chapter have discussed existing theory and research considering both feminist theory and activism, and how this has (or has not) been considered in relation to other areas including local government. The following chapter will lay out the method I developed to carry out my empirical research and data analysis in order to answer my research questions developed from this.

## 4. Method

### *Introduction*

This chapter details the practical methods I utilised to gather and analyse data in order to consider how the concept of gender equality has been activated over the time period and locations under consideration. Although my research is connected to and informed by research on social movements, the particular setting and nature of municipal feminism means that the research methods which have been influential in shaping the project are drawn primarily from qualitative studies of local government and other organisations. Halford's 1990 study of local government women's initiatives was particularly valuable, and also provided the basis of the mapping which I used to frame my own sample. Part of Halford's study involved a questionnaire representatively sampling local authorities across the UK. I used the findings from this, along with her other scoping work, to create a tripartite schematisation of the women's initiatives from which to sample my three case study councils. Bashevkin's 2006 study provided another key reference point as I planned which methods to use. She utilised a combination of interview data and textual analysis of council documents in two sites and across two time periods (London and Toronto, during the 1980s and the early 2000s). I built on this framework in order to gain a broader perspective of the development of gender equality working in local government during, and in the aftermath of, municipal feminism. The Sisterhood and After oral history project which I was simultaneously involved in creating was also a shaping factor in both the social movement background, and underlying methodology of my research. Working on the project added individual detail and complexity to my understanding of this part of the feminist movement through the individuals interviewed. Undertaking training in life history interviewing also strengthened my appreciation of time and depth in relation to data gathering.

The theoretical approaches laid out in the previous two chapters do not prescribe one particular method for carrying out research. Given this flexibility I operationalised qualitative methods — interviews and documentary analysis — that would best address my research questions, within the limitations of time and resources. As previously outlined my overarching questions were:

1. How does contemporary gender equality working compare to municipal feminism practically?
2. How does contemporary gender equality working compare to municipal feminism conceptually?
3. What is the significance of legislation in driving and shaping gender equality working?
4. How do municipal feminist and contemporary workers relate to social movements, practically and conceptually?

In order to answer these questions I selected three geographic sites of local government as case studies, where I could conduct interviews and collect documents to compare gender equality working within the councils over time. I will now expound how I decided upon and enacted this, beginning with research design, sample development and access, interview conduct, analysis, coding and lastly ethical considerations.

### *Research Design*

In order to explore my research questions using in-depth qualitative working I chose to use particular geographic sites of local government as case studies. I selected three sites from around the UK. These were; a large council in the far North, a medium sized council in the South-West, and a borough council in London. This was the result of both pragmatic and idealistic considerations in trying to maximise the insight of the research within the scope of my resources. With this in mind the three cases were chosen to represent variety across a range of factors, including the time in which they established their women's initiative, their size, and their geographic location. The focus of my work was to consider the gender equality working over time, as Halford's (1990) work had already undertaken considerable analysis of the contextual factors affecting women's initiatives. This meant I sought to include a range of different sites in my analysis, with the focus on those that I could use to capture the different temporal dimensions of the municipal feminist period, as well as the temporal comparison between the present day and the time of the initiatives' establishment.

I did not intend to find or present a simplistic causal relationship between the municipal feminist initiatives, and the present day gender equality working within the councils. However, the historical comparison built into my research questions meant that my data collection needed to involve a temporal dimension. Examining both the inception and current manifestation of gender equality work in each site seemed the most feasible way to do this. I then utilised a mixture of data gathered from interviews and texts to address my research questions.

### *Sampling and Access*

Case studies have a wide range of applications in research — from the positivist to the interpretivist, but benefit from enabling the opportunity to both develop and evaluate theoretical explanations (Vennesson, 2008). Generally speaking a case can be seen as, ‘a phenomena, or an event, chosen, conceptualised and analysed empirically as a manifestation of a broader class of phenomena or events’ (Vennesson, 2008: 226). This openness and flexibility as a form of research is a useful aspect of case study research. It was also particularly practical for this research project as I set out to do several things. Firstly, a descriptive element — seeking to give an account of municipal feminism and subsequent local government gender equality work. Secondly, an interpretive and hypothesising element — seeking to position these developments and the people involved in them within the theoretical milieu of social movement theory, sociology, history and gender studies.

Having said this, there are clearly limitations inherent in using a case study based approach. For example, the fundamental issue of defining ‘a case’ as an autonomous unit is not unproblematic. A council is evidently deeply embedded in a broader socio-political context. It is also part of a broader state architecture. Additionally, today councils also commission services from outside companies and organisations. This means there are multiple ways in which you could decide to ‘cut’ out your cases as distinct entities. With an awareness of these complexities, and with my specific interest in those occupying the position of council workers on women or gender equality, I chose to focus on the centralised functions of each administration.



Case study research depends on the existence and accessibility of empirical sources, so in this sense the public nature of what I was studying made it an appropriate choice. Having said this, there remain issues of cognitive bias which occur in all types of social research, including case studies, such as confirmation bias — where the researcher seeks information which confirms their beliefs or hypotheses. As I discuss in more detail below, part of my reasoning behind choosing three quite different sites as cases, and looking at them over time, was to enable me to undertake comparative analysis. This is something which can aid in addressing confirmation bias, using the question ‘what else could it be’ while developing analysis (Vennesson, 2008).

Having decided to utilise a case study approach, there are of course many ways in which one could divide and sample from the hundreds of councils in the UK. Susan Halford’s (1990) work on local government women’s initiatives proved to be extremely useful here, along with the other literature on this period discussed in previous chapters. This enabled me to create a time-line of the development of women’s initiatives, dividing them into three broad periods which I defined as the first ‘pioneering’ initiatives, the ‘enthusiastic followers’ after this, and the ‘late adopters’ formed much later. As discussed in the previous two chapters, the social, political and institutional environment women’s initiatives were situated within underwent considerable developments during the decades in which they were being established. In conjunction with my aim to consider how the concepts associated with gender equality have been actualised over time, this made it particularly useful analytically to select cases which represented different parts of this time period. I thus chose one council which was representative of each cohort, using a range of factors including: seeing to avoid over-studied councils, negotiating access, and ensuring relevant interview subjects would be available. I also undertook considerable scoping work to explore the contemporary picture in terms of council equalities — including online research, and speaking with staff at relevant local government organisations such as the Local Government Association.

To describe the three sites in greater detail: the first is a borough council in London which I refer to throughout as the ‘pioneering’ council. Its women’s initiative was formed quickly at the beginning of the 1980s following from the work undertaken on gender equality by the GLC. Politically the council has been consistently Labour-led throughout the period under study. The current population of the local area is

approximately a quarter of a million, the smallest of my three sites. It was and remains ethnically diverse with over one third of its current population from a black, asian or minority ethnic background. It is also ranked highly in terms of measures of deprivation (i.e. is ranked as relatively very deprived in terms of social, economic and housing issues compared to other parts of the country).

The second site, which I refer to throughout at the 'enthusiastic follower', is a city council in the South-West of the UK. Politically it was Labour-led during the period in the mid-1980s when it founded its women's committee and Liberal Democrat while I was undertaking my research. Its population is under half a million residents. Its population was and remains less ethnically diverse than the pioneering council, but more so than the late adopter, with around 15% of its current population from a black, asian or minority ethnic background. It is ranked less highly than the early adopter in terms of relative measures of deprivation on social, economic and housing issues.

Thirdly, the site which is referred to throughout as the 'late adopter' is a large city in the North of the UK. It did not develop its women's initiative until the beginning of the 1990s and was and remains Labour-led. The population of the area is the largest of my three sites with currently over half a million residents. Around 5% of these are from a black or minority ethnic background. It is socio-economically less affluent than the enthusiastic follower as well as being less ethnically diverse than both of the other two sites.

Access to the contemporary councils was gained though making enquiries with the departments that seemed most related to gender equality in each site. This was generally followed by a long process of explanation and negotiation, allowing time for whoever I first emailed and spoke with to pass on information and consult with other staff and management.

In order to gain a sense of how work on gender equality had changed and developed in each site since the inception of its women's initiative, I sought both to interview workers and collect documents related to the formation of the women's initiative, and to the current work taking place there on gender equality. This required different samples and considerable flexibility. As my research questions were focused on the mid-space between formal politics and outsider activism, I focused my interviews on those individuals involved as workers or volunteers, rather than elected councilors. However,

I did interview at least one councillor in each site, as the literature suggested they played a significant role in the initial establishment of the initiatives.

Finding the contemporary interviewees at each site was much more straightforward than those from the earlier era, as would perhaps be expected. Once access had been gained to a council I would discuss my research and ask who would be most appropriate to interview, negotiating and selecting based on this information. However, with the municipal feminist interviewees from the early initiatives it was a more complex process, and in some ways I had much less choice of interviewees. I began with the archival texts I had collected, scanning them for names of workers who I then researched and attempted to contact. In this way, and through snowballing (Bernard, 2006), I found participants. In many cases these individuals no longer lived or worked geographically, or sectorally, close to the council I was considering. Of course this approach could not seek to be representative — although I did my very best to develop a complete list of possible interviewees. However it did provide a practicable way of finding appropriate and willing participants.

I interviewed six people at each of the three sites — in most cases divided into three current workers and three from the municipal feminist era — 18 interviews in total. The interviewees and their roles at each site are detailed in the following table:

<b>Pioneering council</b>	<b>Enthusiastic follower council</b>	<b>Late adopter council</b>
MUNICIPAL FEMINIST INTERVIEWEES		
Female councillor, first chair of the women's committee	Female councillor, first chair of the women's committee	Female councillor, first chair of the women's advisory group
Female equality worker, first women's officer	Female equality worker, one of three first women's officers	Female equality worker, first women's officer
Female equality worker, staff member of women's unit	Female equality consultant, involved in establishment of women's committee and later a councillor	Female equality worker, staff member working to support the women's officer

CONTEMPORARY INTERVIEWEES		
Female equality worker, head of policy, partnerships and performance	Female equality worker, equalities and community cohesion manager	Female equality worker, head of corporate equalities, research and consultation
Male worker, HR manager of policy and projects	Female equality worker, principal equalities officer	Female worker, senior HR officer, leads on equalities
Male worker, departmental manager	Female equality activist, previously co-chaired council women's forum	Female worker, senior planning and social work officer

Accessing the relevant documents I wished to examine was also much more straightforward for the present day working — given that many councils publish their policy documents, reports and monitoring data online. If documents were not publically available, I could easily request they be emailed to me in electronic form. Finding texts related to the creation and early years of the women's initiatives involved identifying and visiting local archives — both local government and feminist — in each of the three areas. These were catalogued to varying degrees, meaning that I was mostly only able to find out what exactly was contained in each archive by physically searching through boxes and files.

Because of the uncertainty around what exactly would be available in each archive, and the very different ways in which documents had been kept, the sampling of documents had to take shape after I had spent time in the different archives. Having done as much advance preparation as the catalogue for each archive allowed I spent days in each archive looking through any records which related to the women's initiative. I took photographs or scans of directly relevant material and took notes on what I was looking at. In one of the councils this was reasonably straightforward as all relevant documents were bound into a series of volumes. However, in another of the councils there were barely any documents kept at all, and documents which were supposed to have been deposited in a feminist archive were not able to be found by the archivists. Of course this meant that along with the fact that the documents themselves only represent a particular formal account of the work being done on gender equality, there was no way I had the complete formal record to begin with. However, these sorts of issue are

perennial in archival research (Hill, 1993), thus although it is important to be aware of them, they don't undermine the validity of my research project.

The records kept from the women's initiatives in each council site also ranged from great detail and most records, to only the minutes of formal committee meetings. So I had to think carefully about what documents I could use from all three sites that would be reasonably comparable. In the end this was the terms of reference of each women's initiative, their work plans and progress reports (see table below). For the contemporary sites I used their equality action plans or schemes, their progress reports/annual reviews and their equality impact assessments and guidelines for completing them (see table below). The rest of the documents I read and collected I used as background information, but did not code in detail. This amounted to hundreds of documents; for the municipal feminist era the minutes of the women's committees during their entire existence which were available in the councils' archives, any other documents relating to the initiatives in feminist archives, and any related documents individual interviewees had saved themselves. For the contemporary period this included any documents available on the councils' websites relating to equalities, and any documents the interviewees indicated were informative about their work. The primary documents analysed from each site are detailed in the following table:

<b>Pioneering council</b>	<b>Enthusiastic follower council</b>	<b>Late adopter council</b>
MUNICIPAL FEMINIST DOCUMENTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's committee terms of reference</li> <li>• Women's unit staff job descriptions</li> <li>• Women's unit work plan</li> <li>• Women's unit progress report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's committee terms of reference</li> <li>• Women's unit staff job descriptions</li> <li>• Women's unit work plan</li> <li>• Women's unit progress report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's advisory group terms of reference</li> <li>• Women's unit work plan</li> <li>• Women's unit progress report</li> <li>• Women and equality policy statement</li> </ul>

CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest council gender equality scheme</li> <li>• Latest corporate equality plan outturn report</li> <li>• Equality impact assessments guidance notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest council single equality scheme</li> <li>• Latest annual report on equalities and community cohesion</li> <li>• Equalities impact assessment guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest council integrated equality scheme</li> <li>• Council equality policy</li> <li>• Latest integrated equality scheme progress report</li> </ul>

### *Conduct of Interviews*

To gain an in-depth understanding of the organisation, ethos and working in each council I designed semi-structured interview guides (see appendices). All but two interviews were carried out in person (and all were recorded) in the home or workplace of participants, the other two were carried out by phone. They lasted one to two hours depending on the availability of each person. Factors I considered in developing my questions included the need to ask single things at a time, to avoid leading questions, to sequence questions sensibly, and to ask both specific and open ended questions (Buckingham and Saunders, 2004).

It must be acknowledged that the past and present interviewees had quite different perspectives on what I was asking them. For the contemporary workers I was asking them about something which they were currently immersed in, enabling easy recall. Having said this, it was also arguably potentially a more sensitive topic — their work, organisation and politics — which may have made them less open to sharing their personal reflections. This was illustrated during interviews where participants would stress that they were profering their own, and not their organisation's, views. This led to my early decision to anonymise both the councils and the interviewees, to make sure people felt comfortable and would not be affected by my findings. For the municipal feminist interviewees I was asking them to reflect on things which took place 20–30

years ago, meaning things were generally not sensitive, but could be hard for them to remember.

Both the interview guides for contemporary and municipal feminist era workers were headed with the broad themes I was interested in and framed in my research questions. In the case of the municipal feminist era these were:

- Gender equality working during the 80s/90s practical and conceptual
- Organisation and identity
- Professional and feminist identity
- Political views
- Connection to WLM/feminist activism

In the contemporary era these were:

- Gender equality working today, practical and conceptual
- Continuities/discontinuities between work in the past and today
- Professional and feminist identity
- Political views
- Connection to WLM/feminist activism

These were useful as a top-line guide for myself to glance at if I needed to refocus, and below this were listed a series of more specific questions divided into several categories. In both cases these aimed to address both the individual and organisational dimensions of work on gender equality. I began by asking about people's job titles, how they came to be involved in their role and their professional background as things to ease people into the interview. Following from this I asked those involved during the municipal feminist era about the formation, operation, successes and failures of the women's initiative. I would then return to more personal questions, asking about their political views and motivations, and their reflections on their work. With the contemporary workers I would ask about the way in which gender equality work was arranged and carried out within their council and discuss how they had seen this change

and develop, as well as its connection to people and organisations outside the council. I would then move on to ask more about people's personal perspective on their role and their politics. I would also ask them about the history of equalities work in local government, making reference to my own work.

I rounded interviews off by asking people about either how their careers had developed after working on equalities in local government, or how they would like them to develop, and then asking if they had anything else at all they would like to add or tell me about. This provided a useful way of ensuring I didn't miss information that my interviewees felt was important, as well as providing the opportunity for them to clarify or modify elements of our discussion.

### *Analysis and Coding*

As is evident from the discussion so far of my sample and research design, I gathered a reasonably wide range of materials to be included as 'data' for analysis — a variety of documents, plus my interview transcripts. In analysing this I drew insights from discourse analysis and hermeneutic theorising. These are useful in recognising both the constructed and constituting nature of 'talk' about gender equality, and the need to consider this talk in its broader institutional, historical and socio-political context when seeking to understand it.

A Foucauldian perspective regards discourses as historically specific systems of meaning (Foucault, 1972) that both reflect and shape social relations (Allan, 2008). This contributed to the understanding of discourse I brought to my data analysis, but was also joined by an awareness of the material dimension in which discourses are located (Parker, 1992). This supplemented the Foucauldian emphasis on the contingent and ambiguous nature of social structures (Howarth, 2000). Rather than elevating either the material or the discursive, I was influenced by hermeneutic approaches to analysis that encompass both interpretive and experiential elements (Cerwonka and Malkki, 2007). This links back to a conception of knowledge as situated, and sees:

understanding, as distinguished from having correct information and scientific knowledge, is a complicated process which never produces unequivocal results. It is



an unending activity by which, in constant change and variation, we come to terms with and reconcile ourselves to reality (Arendt, 2005: 307).

This meant that attending to my data I was conscious that on the one hand it contained certain material truths, for example budgets or ‘official’ lines or policies. Yet on the other hand it also contained multiple and at times conflicting accounts of events and personal motivations. In my mind as I began my analysis I felt clear that neither one of these took priority, particularly as the very point of this research was to look at the space of interpretation and enactment around legislation, policies and accepted academic concepts.

Having discussed some of the considerations which informed my data analysis, in order to be as transparent as possible I will now outline the process I undertook to actually carry this out (Hodges et al., 2008). I undertook training in Nvivo so that I could use it to organise my data, and then transcribed in full and uploaded all my interview transcripts, along with the photographs and scans of the documents. I based my coding process on that described by Elizabeth Allan (Allan, 2008). This involved a build up and layering of deductive and inductive coding, and writing to develop analysis — mixing poststructuralist, interpretive and feminist insights regarding policy as discourse situated within a broader social context.

I began the process of coding my data in its entirety, using around 10 codes based on my research questions, some of which were more theoretical and others more literal. These included, for example, ‘equality’ and ‘organisation of work’. I also added codes as I went along which seemed appropriate, so codes became grouped around particular topics in order to express their different facets. For example, ‘gender’, ‘gender equality’, ‘how are they working on gender equality’, ‘gender isn’t a problem’.

Following this, I then looked at the material gathered at each code, and considered how this worked as a whole, how it might be broken down into sub-codes, and if things had been missed out. I then also examined how the codes related to the different sites, and the different time periods, looking for patterns. I repeated this process again, before writing up an account of the codes, notes and reflections I had made so far. Following this I switched to focusing on single themes at a time, in order to think in greater depth about how the data related to my research questions. This became particularly necessary as the number of codes I had grew, and it became impossible to consider their relevance

for each segment of text simultaneously. It was also important as some sections of data eventually ended up being coded multiple times.

Distinguishing the discourses I was interested in was a gradual process as I undertook the coding of the data, and considered it in relation to the initial literature and theory framing my study, as well as my research questions. I considered how topics and concepts were framed by the individuals and texts, how the sites and time periods compared, and what the implications of these were.

To illustrate the research process further, I will describe the build up of two codes. Firstly I had a code 'GLC' which I applied whenever an interviewee or a document referred to the Greater London Council. This was relatively straightforward to apply consistently, and I could also run text searches in order to check if I had missed references in my different rounds of coding.

A code which was more complicated to apply, and interwove with other ones, was 'what the job requires'. I used this as I attempted to gain a sense of the characteristics and skills of the council gender equality workers. On the one hand this code included bits of text taken from the job descriptions of the municipal feminist workers. However, it also included parts drawn from the interviews where people reflected on their own struggles and successes at work, their day to day duties, and also their ideas about what motivated them.

A discourse which ran throughout the thesis, from my initial literature review to the analysis and writing, was the idea that feminism and professionalism are antithetical to each other. This was something evident in several of the feminist texts which were written from the 1960s onwards, and as discussed in the previous chapters, was also present in different theoretical and historical perspectives on social movements. So this was something I then considered in the context of the councils' equality working, through the texts and workers' accounts of this.

With such an interpretive approach, it is useful to reflect on how we understand the concept of validity. If we have given up the notion of obtaining knowledge in pasturised form (Geertz, 2000), unmediated by our position as a researcher, it is important to be explicit about the methods which have been followed in research. Thinking reflexively throughout the process at least highlights limitations and assumptions which we are

aware of, triangulation allows for a range of sources to inform analysis, and multiple methods can help address each other's weaknesses (Vennesson, 2008). There were several ways in which I built reflexivity into the process of my research. Firstly, I recognised from the beginning that my own personal involvement in feminist politics and issues of organising informed my interest in this area of study. There were undoubtedly ways in which this seemed beneficial — for example, giving some sense of legitimacy and connection to my work with research participants. It also meant I could identify repetition of certain topics or problems, which meant I felt connected to the broader historical phenomenon I was researching. However, it could also be argued that my personal investment in the topic could have skewed my perception towards what I wanted to observe in the data.

Another key element in my reflexive research practice was the daily writing and regular reviewing of my research diary. This meant I had a record of my activities as well as my reflections upon it — which was extremely useful throughout the process in developing my thoughts and tracing their trajectory. It was also an important tool for learning about and improving on what did and did not work — for example, in terms of interviewing technique. In addition to this, it has helped me to remain conscious of the limitations of my data as I wrote down problems and worries as they occurred to me.

As well as writing and reflecting in my research diary, in the process of analysis I also considered the questions posed by George and Bennet (2005). This led me to think about how I could show my readers that I did not impose my favoured theory as explanation, how I considered alternative theories, whether my findings really supported my proposed explanation, and how my readers would know this. These served as useful reminders to constantly check and consider my own thought processes.

Of course reflexivity might not seem to be much help with the 'unknown unknowns', or our unintentional frames (Lombardo and Meier, 2009) with which we view our data. However, in the process of research there are systematic ways to begin to address this. For example, seeking to avoid confirmation bias (where the researcher seeks information that confirms their beliefs and avoids that which contradicts them) one can directly consider alternative hypotheses, asking, 'what else can it be?' (Vennesson, 2008). In addition to this, in developing and presenting my understandings I aimed to

show as much as possible of the process, allowing readers to scrutinise the research more fully.

### *Ethical Considerations*

In relation to the University of Sussex's ethical review process, my research was satisfactorily passed as low risk. This was based on my research outline with participants being over 18 and not particularly vulnerable or over-studied. The interview schedules I devised were not deemed to be stressful or damaging, and there were no drugs or payment involved in the research.

Having said this, although the process of ethical review is important, it doesn't begin to address the demands of fieldwork as quotidian ethical practice (Cerwonka and Malkki, 2007). At all points of the research process — not just when directly interacting with participants — issues of an ethical nature presented themselves to me, requiring constant reflection. Several core ethical principles (Willig, 2001) informed my approach to the research process. Firstly, the notion of informed consent was important as I approached participants to solicit their involvement in the research. I developed a short information sheet (see appendices) which I would distribute to gatekeepers at each site and potential interviewees along with a consent form (see appendices). I would then discuss the project with them and explain what their participation would involve, including the time it would take. Of course in many cases people took time before getting back to me with a decision on whether or not they were willing to participate, and in the case of gatekeepers they would consult with other relevant members of staff. At this early stage I also became conscious that although I wasn't looking at an over-studied area, some participants had previous experience with researchers and so brought particular expectations or worries from this that I needed to address.

Another key ethical principle which I considered from the very start of the process was that of anonymity for participants. In my initial research plans I left anonymity open on the consent forms. I envisaged negotiating this with participants on an individual basis, but felt there might be good reason to attempt to be open about the locations I was using as case studies. However, my views on this changed as I began my fieldwork. There were several reasons for this, firstly in the process of negotiating with potential case

study sites anonymity became something which some wanted as a prerequisite for their participation which naturally I was keen to encourage. Secondly, although one of the case study sites, and numerous individual participants, expressed their happiness to be named in my work, as the interviews and analysis progressed I came to think it was better for everyone involved to be anonymous. This was because I became conscious of how frank many people were being with me about their professional lives and co-workers. In order to protect them from any repercussions from this, as well as allowing me to feel slightly freer in my analysis of their reflections, I decided that all sites and individuals would be anonymised. This seemed especially important for the contemporary element of the research as people were talking about their current working environment and senior management, added to the fact local government was undergoing significant change and scrutiny at the point at which I was carrying out my work. The municipal feminist era participants I interviewed were talking about events of previous decades, the passage of time making anything they disclosed less sensitive. My own maintenance of the anonymity of the sites and individuals, as well as complying with data protection guidelines, was tested frequently. Throughout the course of carrying out my research, my interviewees and other informants, as well as peers and friends naturally asked questions about the nature of the work, in particular who and where I was studying. I found it hard at times to justify not sharing the locations and individuals under study, particularly to participants who were themselves being generous with their time. I resolved this though given a generalised account of the sorts of people and places being studied when questioned, and explaining why I was maintaining their anonymity.

Broadly speaking, I hope that I managed to conduct myself with as much ethical integrity as possible. Key in doing this was being constantly reflexive — through my research diary, as well as discussion with supervisors and other researchers. If there were questions or moments where I felt uncertain of myself I would always use caution and seek advice from my supervisors as soon as possible. This can be illustrated by the following examples.

Firstly, a recurrent issue for me, and indeed one I was also conscious of during my MPhil research, was the idea of leading questions, or more generally steering interviewees through the interview process. Specifically I worried that I was leading interviewees to provide the answers I wanted, or that matched my own opinions or

theories on the topics we were discussing. I think this worry of mine was also made worse by the fact that some of the interviews had to be kept fairly short due to the time pressure on the contemporary workers. This minimised the amount of time I could spend explaining the project, or building rapport and a general sense of each interviewee to enable me to contextualise their responses. One interview in particular sticks in my mind, where I found myself struggling to on the one hand support my interviewee to express their opinions fully, but also on the other not wanting to put words or ideas into their mouth. I found myself feeling surprised by their attitude and (from my perspective) lack of knowledge about gender and equality. However I felt worried about presenting them in a 'bad' light and wanted to allow ample opportunity for them to show their understanding, which I think led me to be more suggestive in what I was saying. More broadly, as I have moved on to analysis and writing while continuing to think about how I carried out my data collection, I have felt conscious of the limitations of the interview format I employed. I realise that during the course of people's work they may not have had time to reflect on what they are doing, or the policies and politics it is connected to. Asking people about concepts underlying their work, in however an open way, may not be a very good reflection of their knowledge and understanding. This is not least because some people don't find expressing themselves verbally as comfortable as other mediums. If time had allowed I think that multiple interviews with participants and/or additional written questionnaires would have been useful in addressing this.

Another issue which I found ethically challenging during the research process emerged during recruitment. At one point I had arranged to speak on the phone with someone I hoped to interview. I explained the research and the usual routine for interviews — that they could be at a time and location convenient to the interviewee, and that I was conscious to fit into whatever time they had available. After I had explained myself, the person I was calling began to ask me about payment quite forcefully. I was surprised and somewhat caught off guard as this wasn't something I had talked about with anyone else, and indeed I had no budget to pay anyone. As kindly as possible I explained this, and stressed that I didn't require participants to do any preparation for our meeting, just talk with me for an hour or so (or whatever they could manage). However, this didn't satisfy the person's request and they continued to question the legitimacy of my asking for their time to be given freely, to the extent that I felt very upset and guilty. After

ending the conversation as politely as possible I had time to reflect on the incident. One element which made our interaction particularly fraught for me was the way in which it rehearsed fundamental feminist arguments about the value of women's time and work, which I personally subscribe to. The challenge from this potential interviewee struck hard into my desire to carry out what I wanted to believe was ethical feminist research, and really made me question my ability to do so. Although my supervisor reassured me that I hadn't been unreasonable in my request or actions, it nonetheless strongly underlined certain things for me as a researcher which I carried forward. Critically, it reinforced the fact that however much I care about my research and wanting to answer certain questions, nothing is more important than the human relationships formed in the research process, and making sure the people who have been generous enough to participate feel happy with their choice. This was something I returned to think about often at points where I had decisions to make about how to progress.

Having laid out the methodological foundations of my empirical research in this chapter, as well as discussing the field of theory and literature from which my questions stemmed, the following chapters explore and analyse the data I collected. Chapters five and six compare the practical and conceptual work undertaken by the municipal and contemporary initiatives. Chapter seven examines the significance of legislation in the development of gender equality working in my sites, and chapter eight discusses how we can best understand the equality workers in relation to feminism and social movements.

## **5. Municipal Feminism and Gender Equality: Practical Approaches to Working in Local Government**

### *Introduction*

The shift from thinking about ‘women’ to ‘gender’ has taken place over the past 30 years both in and out of academia. Although this has been well documented, it has not been given a great deal of attention in the arena of local government, nor in relation to the practical work which takes place under this heading. This is perhaps surprising given the vibrancy of work on gender equality which flourished there during the 1980s, as discussed in previous chapters. Seeking to explore if and how this has been manifest, and with what implications, this thesis compares the practical and conceptual dimensions of three municipal feminist initiatives with contemporary gender equality working. Although the two areas are interconnected, for the sake of clarity this chapter focuses on the practical and the following chapter on the conceptual dimensions. Together these chapters thus contribute to the overall aim of this thesis to examine the practical enactment of concepts rooted in feminist thought. Raewyn Connell’s account of gender as a multi-level set of relationships structuring social relations, stresses the importance of practice in its production and change. This underlines my focus on the practice and organisation of work within the local government initiatives. By looking closely at the work being undertaken we can gain insight into this process. Although, as discussed in chapters two and three, there was research undertaken on municipal feminism during the 1980s as it was taking place, it has not been considered a great deal in relation to the subsequent developments which have taken place in local government. The current and following chapter utilise archival and contemporary texts from three council sites, as well as interview data. In doing so I re-engage with the existing literature on the municipal feminist developments of the 1980s, considering the ways in which my data reflects the wide-ranging work undertaken under this rubric. Following this I go on to examine the significance of the municipal feminist era for work taking place today. This is expounded through a careful comparison of the gender equality working in each council over time. I argue that specific characteristics established during the municipal feminist period have endured, despite wider political and organisational changes that have affected all three sites. I show how the organisational



position and form of the municipal feminist initiatives, and the degree to which they sought to engage with the public, appear to correlate with the work on gender equality taking place today. This is also linked to my broader argument regarding the ways in which the legacy of the WLM has filtered through local government.

This chapter begins to introduce and analyse the data I collected during my fieldwork. It focuses on the practical working of the three sites, with the following chapter considering the conceptual foundations of their approaches. I begin by discussing the municipal feminist working of my three sites in relation to the existing literature. In doing so I consider the initiatives across five dimensions; their organisational position and form, their work on issues internal to the council, their work on issues external to the council, their relationship with the public, and their engagement in national networks.

### *Establishment and Working of the Municipal Feminist Initiatives*

The literature on municipal feminism discusses the significance of the way the initiatives were established and organized for their subsequent operation (Button, 1984, Edwards, 1989, Halford, 1990). For example, the corporate positioning of initiatives within the council and their access to resources, have been marked as important in determining the range and efficacy of their activities. Other factors highlighted as significant were their political backing, the organisational response of the rest of the council, and the external mobilisation in the surrounding population. Broadly speaking the national political scene was Conservative during the period of municipal feminism, with Margaret Thatcher followed by John Major in power. Although not all women's initiatives were formed by Labour-led councils, the resistance of many councils to the leadership of central government flavours the backdrop to their development.

My three sites reflect the range of situations in which women's initiatives were formed, as discussed in chapters two and three. Firstly, the 'late adopter' initiative formed at the beginning of the 1990s provides an example of one formed with relatively low status. It had an advisory role only, without formal committee or sub-committee status, and just three staff to carry out its work. In contrast the 'pioneering' initiative was established almost ten years earlier, at the beginning of the 1980s, with high status as a sub-

committee and then full committee, and with a unit of staff that quickly expanded to eight members. Although the late adopter unit was situated within the chief executive's department, conferring some degree of status upon it, in both the pioneering and 'enthusiastic follower' initiatives staff members had permission to attend the council's senior management team meetings. This meant in practice they were more readily able to work alongside and influence different parts of the council. In terms of the internal organisation of the initiatives, my sites again reflect the range of set-ups evident in the literature. The enthusiastic follower, created in the mid-1980s embraced collective working among its small team of officers, the late adopter had a clear hierarchy of authority and responsibility between its three staff, and the pioneering had a hierarchical structure and more rigidly delegated responsibilities among its staff.

As discussed earlier, municipal feminist initiatives sought to work on issues internal to the councils they were part of in numerous ways. The councils' employment practices, working conditions and training provision were the most prominent among these, but other areas worked on included childcare and staff support networks (for example lesbian, gay, BME, and disabled) (Halford, 1990, Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). This was generally also borne out in my three case study sites. For example, the pioneering initiative developed new employment and recruitment policies that were implemented across the full range of council departments. The enthusiastic follower worked to develop policies and procedures to tackle sexual harassment in the workplace, while the late adopter developed training for women on skills including assertiveness and management.

In addition to working on the internal organisation and practice of their councils, previous research has suggested that women's initiatives sought to create new services or modify existing ones, in order to meet women's unmet needs within their local community (Halford, 1990, Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). The great multiplicity of projects developed to this end was reflected in my three sites — for example, the pioneering initiative developed special swimming sessions for pregnant women in local sports centres to enable them to feel comfortable and safe exercising. The enthusiastic follower distributed thousands of pounds in grants to local women developing different ventures — from crèches to community arts. The late adopter provided information and advice to members of the public on a range of issues. These examples give just a flavour

of the types of working developed, and in many cases similar topics were given attention across all three council sites.

The efforts of women's initiatives to democratise the working of councils and engage meaningfully with local women in particular, was an important and groundbreaking aspect of their working (Goss, 1984, Edwards, 1988, Brownill and Halford, 1990, Halford, 1990, Stokes, 1998). The literature suggests that in many cases the areas of work taken up by women's initiatives (discussed above) reflected their efforts to consult with the local community (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993). These efforts to democratise council working and engage with local women were very much in evidence across my research sites. For example, the pioneering initiative opened a women's centre with a shop front where women could walk in to meet, participate, contribute and comment on work being undertaken. The enthusiastic follower initiative undertook considerable consultation with local women about what they wanted from the initiative, and also put careful planning into the co-optation of a range of women onto the council committee. The late adopter undertook public meetings in different geographic areas of the council.

All three of my research sites also engaged with professional networks in relation to their women's initiatives. In the pioneering initiative this was primarily through connecting and collaborating with the first few other women's initiatives which were established at the time. Both the enthusiastic follower and late adopter engaged with the National Association of Local Government Women's Committees (NALGWC), which provided a key place for sharing knowledge and ideas as well as support, for both councillors and workers. NALGWC was a membership organisation which arranged regular conferences for councillors and officers, and shared information between women's initiatives.

Thus it can be seen that across the five dimensions discussed above, data from my three case study sites supports the account in the existing literature of the topics and type of working being undertaken by municipal feminist women's initiatives. This suggests that despite the limitation of examining only three sites, they are generally representative of the municipal feminist milieu. I now move on to give an overview of the way in which work on gender equality has developed subsequently across the three council sites. Following this I undertake an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the past and present working on gender equality.

### *Contemporary Gender Equality Working*

Although Wendy Stokes' (1998) research provides a useful example of more recent work on women's initiatives, there is not a great amount of other research on this topic. In addition to this, in many cases the initiatives themselves no longer exist in a recognisable form. Work that takes place today on gender equality in local government is no longer grounded in discrete women's initiatives. Instead it is usually combined with other strands of equality working (including race and ethnicity, disability, age, religion and belief, sexuality, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment and marriage and civil partnership) and this itself may not take place within a specific location in the council as an organisation (Stokes, 1996). Responsibility to attend to a generic equalities agenda can be seen to be spread (to varying degrees) throughout a council organisation, and/or staff may have equalities as part rather than all of their role — rather than there being a clearly defined central equalities team who carry out the council's work in this area. All three of my research sites reflected this shift to some extent — although they have not all moved towards generic equalities and its organisational decentralisation to the same degree.

In relation to the internal working of the council, all three sites reflected similar changes. For example, work on gender equality and employment issues is now carried out by human resources (HR) as opposed to equalities staff. Similarly, certain practices have now become standardised in relation to equality, such that all internal and external policies and services undergo a similar procedure. This generally involves practice based on the idea of gender mainstreaming involving data monitoring, planning, consulting, impact assessment, publishing and reporting (Rees, 2002), which I discuss in more detail in the following chapter. To some extent this practice has been shaped by changes in the management of local government generally (Prior, 1993, Leach and Barnett, 1997, Newman, 2000). For example the rise of performance management in local government, including the development of performance indicators by the (now defunct) Audit Commission (Sanderson, 1998). However, there is great variation in the degree of detail and attention given to these practices. In terms of issues external to the council, the three sites all showed a reduction in the amount of work specifically focused on women. This was not unexpected given that two of the sites no longer had a

unit focused solely on women or equalities in order to develop such work. Work specifically focused on women could still be seen in the area of domestic violence, but is commissioned rather than carried out by the council itself. Although consultation has today become a quotidian part of council business (in which women feature), it takes a different form to during the municipal feminist era, and it usually no longer attends specifically to women. Rather than staging events or meetings, consultations are more likely to take place online with a request for opinions put out to organisations and the general public. Broadly speaking all three councils have less capacity specifically dedicated to engaging with the public around gender equality, although as I will discuss in more detail later, there remain significant differences between the sites which have endured over time.

The engagement of my three council sites with equality networks has changed significantly since the inception of the initiatives. To start with, the relevant networks are no longer the same — NALGWC no longer exists. There are various other networks which link local councils, but many of these only deal with equality as a part of their agenda. The Equality Framework (previously Standard) for Local Government is one way in which councils have worked on developing their equalities working supported by other councils. However it costs councils a significant amount of money (thousands of pounds) to engage with this. Other regional networks such as Capital Ambition (in London) and Core Cities do provide a way for councils to share knowledge, including on equalities. There is also guidance available from the EHRC on legislative developments. The pioneering council is engaged to some extent with a regional network of other councils, the enthusiastic follower is involved with the Equality Framework for Local Government and a reduced number of regional networks, and the late adopter is not much involved with networks in relation to equality, with interviewees being sceptical about their utility.

As I have discussed here, there are clear ways in which the three sites examined have undergone similar changes to their work on gender equality when considered across a range of dimensions. This can be situated within the broader picture of change in the organisation and management of local government, as well as social, political and legislative developments. However, as I now go on to argue there are also distinctive enduring characteristics to the working on gender equality in each of the sites, alongside this overarching change. I develop this argument by looking in more detail at two

dimensions of the initiatives — their organisational position and form, and their work to engage with the public. In doing so, and by comparing all three sites, I reveal the significance of the municipal feminist initiatives for the contemporary gender equality working.

*The Significance of Municipal Working for the Contemporary — Organisational Position and Form, and Public Engagement*

*Organisational Position and Form — Pioneering*

In the pioneering council the women's initiative was established at the beginning of the 1980s with fairly high status, illustrated by the fact that the head of its unit had permission to sit on the chief officers' board. This was significant due to its decision making role, but also as she recounted to me during our interview, she was the first woman to sit on the chief officer board of the council. This connects to the findings of earlier research which highlighted the importance of organisational positioning, political backing and resources to the efficacy of women's initiatives. In terms of its organisational positioning, from the outset it appears that the pioneering women's initiative sought to work alongside other council departments in as integrated a fashion as possible. Remembering her work on the initiative, one of my interviewees explained the importance of this as follows:

I think the success of initiatives throughout the council depended upon whether you had some key people elsewhere in the council who were willing to take up the baton and run with it in their department. I, you know I've said this because I think this is quite an interesting one, that just telling a particular department that you've got to do this or whatever is one thing. But if there's somebody in that department, sort of a certain department where there were people who were committed to this and they would sort of fight the corner for you. (Wendy, Women's Committee Chair, Pioneering Council)

An important part of this integration was evidently the supportive relationships built with individuals in different areas of the council by the women's initiative staff. These individuals then formed an important element of how the initiative influenced the

council as an organisation. Expanding on the idea of integrated working and the importance of individuals another interviewee commented on their work:

as we did bring people on board and you connected to people then that could make a huge difference. As I said, the director of housing, once I'd made a real connection to him and the director of social services. So you have to understand where people are coming from and what will kind of tick their box to bring things along. It's not enough to be right about something. (Rachel, Women's Officer, Pioneering Council)

Both of these quotations illustrate the emphasis and effort put into embedding the work of the women's initiative into the rest of the council during the early 1980s, one of the key tenets of gender mainstreaming. This is striking as this was not the terms in which the women's initiatives were discussed at the time, or indeed in the subsequent literature which has examined them. Although the concept of mainstreaming was developed at the point at which the women's initiatives were created and operated, there did not appear to be recognition of this within the texts I examined. I discuss the relationship of the initiatives to the theory of gender mainstreaming further in the following chapter.

It is important to note that although the number of staff in the pioneering women's unit did expand to some extent following its formation, this happened in conjunction with efforts to develop work and staff in other departments — rather than empire building. This included seconding members of staff from other departments to the women's unit, and is exemplified by the way in which a separate low pay unit was developed from work begun in the women's unit. This was a significant resource with several staff members, yet one of my interviewees recounted the rationale for this being separate as follows:

there were a number of people who said at the time oh we should have that, you know, the unit should be in the women's unit, and I said no. No, low pay is a particular issue for women but actually it needs to be in the economic affairs department so we managed to get expansion of resources...as we got resources, we didn't centralise them, we didn't say here is a women's unit of three or four staff and now we're going to be 20 or 25. (Rachel, Women's Officer, Pioneering Council)

This interviewee went on to explain their perspective that it was more important that they embedded a perspective on women into other departments (paid for by the

departments themselves), than growing the women's unit exponentially. They felt that ensuring departments, like housing and social services, were considering the perspective introduced by the women's unit was a more important way of bringing about change in the council's working. So again we can see the way they positioned their work in relation to the rest of the council as prefiguring gender mainstreaming. Rachel viewed the initiative's work as about spreading an understanding and eye on women throughout the council (the distinction between working on women and working on gender is also discussed in the following chapter). In this case we can also see the way in which the work of the initiative is seen to intersect with other issues such as income inequality and housing. Rachel also conveys the clear aim of changing the council as an organisation, which is notable in terms of how we should position women's initiatives in relation to social movement theory (which I discuss in chapter eight). This is an important channel through which social movements can be seen to influence broader social change, adding to the argument that we should regard the municipal feminist initiatives and their contemporary equivalents as connected to the legacy of the feminist movement.

Returning to the question of organisational position and form, of all three sites the pioneer's working on gender equality began with the clearest aim to be organisationally dispersed throughout the council. Today, 30 years later, this remains the case, although there has been considerable change in the organisation of gender equality working — as discussed above. This is illustrated by the account of the council's work given by one of the contemporary interviewees in 2011. Having described in detail the way the council's gender equality working has moved from campaigning and project work to policy making, implementation and monitoring, they explained that the current working aimed:

to get beyond having to have individuals to ensure that happened, to make sure it was mainstreamed into the way in which day to day business is undertaken. So that when directorates are service planning they have in their mind's eye issues of gender, and you know that part of service performance arrangements would include a gender analysis, but it would just be parcel of what you do, and you don't need specialists around to do it. Because of course the problem of having specialists around to do it is that everything just gets devolved to them, and it's not part of the manager's job. So it's very much around making all equality part of the manager's job. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)



This interviewee also explained why this meant they did not have a specific gender or generic equalities unit. So we can see the parallel with the earlier incarnation of work by the women's initiative being spread and integrated throughout the different parts of the council, however, with the suggestion that this moves away from a reliance on individuals to carry work forward. The language of mainstreaming is now also explicitly being employed, as well as more specific elements of this as a practice — such as policies, planning, performance frameworks, and their evaluation. Discussing the current approach of the council to equalities one interviewee explained it is:

about setting up processes for monitoring opportunity of outcomes, not just about opportunity but who's actually benefiting from resources and is there a gender imbalance or not. So it's about measuring that and having a performance framework around equalities. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

Although this could be seen to describe the successful mainstreaming of gender, without the need for a centralised women's or equalities unit, as I discuss later, comparison with the other sites shows that this is not straightforward as a marker by which to evaluate their working.

As with the women's initiative created at the beginning of the 1980s, working on gender equality today in the pioneering council is still presented as being of reasonably high status — in the sense of being a non-negotiable element of the council's ethos. This was described by one of my interviewees who talked about the way in which recruitment processes today routinely consider equality, and who went on to point out:

people know it's part of the furniture if you like...And you kind of don't have to justify it to the managers because they kind of know that's the deal. (Antony, Human Resources Manager, Pioneering Council)

From the perspective of institutionalism, this quotation illustrates the shifting of norms which have taken place in relation to work on gender equality. Antony describes the work undertaken today as uncontroversial and taken for granted — as opposed to something challenging as it was described by the interviewees involved in the formation of the women's initiative. So we can see the significance of the initiative in laying the ground — despite organisational resistance — for the ensuing normalisation of work on

gender equality. This is an important element within the factors needed to bring about institutional change.

*Organisational Position and Form — Enthusiastic Follower*

In the enthusiastic follower council the women's initiative was launched in the mid-1980s, with a high status position similar to the pioneering council. Sitting on the management board where key decisions were discussed and decided upon was groundbreaking, and a significant way for the women's unit staff to have influence. As one interviewee recounted this was also quite a testing experience:

Emily: it was every Monday and we went, I went mostly because the others couldn't bear it. We had two places, we went in twos for about 18 months and then we took it in turns, although I took more of the turns because I could bear it more than the other two.

FJR: Why do you think they couldn't bear it?

Emily: Well all the, they were all men, em they were, some of them very traditional men. Everybody sat in the same place, in fact I used to get there early and sit in somebody else's chair just to see how I might disrupt it and make the dynamic a bit different or...

FJR: Did it work?

Emily: Yeah, well whoever's chair I sat on would always have that, a kind of hurt look like he'd been picked on [laughs] it was really odd. It was um, sometimes it reminded me of, in those days, what's the name of the programme, there was a programme puppet programme — *Spitting Image*. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

Emily went on to explain a recurring skit based on Margaret Thatcher's cabinet, and how she remembered the other, all male, committee members would routinely talk over each other, in chaos, without listening. This obviously added to what she felt was an overtly masculine atmosphere, with military and sporting metaphors frequently used to explain things, and her need to be forceful as the sole woman to have any

influence. Although the workers of the women's unit had to develop different strategies in order to intervene in the meeting, of which this is a light-hearted example, they did manage to influence and shape decision making through their presence. Emily explained why their attendance was important:

Emily: Because it was possible to influence some things and because, because we did influence, I and the others did influence some things.

FJR: Can you remember anything that sticks in your mind that you felt was important that you negotiated?

Emily: Well we would talk for example about the budget, the annual budget and people would, and and this was the only Labour council in the area at this time...And every year the council, the [inaudible] was reduced from the government so we had to look at cuts in services, and it was possible to sit in that meeting and affect which things were proposed for cuts. So for example there would be talk about um the parks in the city, well we don't really need park keepers do we, what do they do they just drive around and sit in their sheds or whatever. And we could say, it's the park keepers that keep the park safe for women and children and if you reduce that you risk this this and this, this is a really bad thing. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

She also went on to discuss other areas where she felt they had been influential in shaping the budget, such as housing, children and domestic violence. As Emily points out here, being included on the management board not only conveyed status formally on the women's unit workers, but allowed them to influence decisions the council was making in terms of its external work, and in terms of its internal organisation. As she vividly recounts, taking a playful approach to intervene in the traditional organisation and institutions of the management board itself was shocking to the other staff. This illustrates the interaction between the formal and informal institutions of the council — and how these were being disrupted. For example, the informal possession of particular chairs in the official meeting provided an opportunity for Emily to challenge the assumptions of other management staff. Equally, she describes the process of formally contributing evidence to discussions regarding service provision and cuts that challenged the status quo.

Although both were established with reasonably high status, in contrast to the organisation of the pioneering initiative, the enthusiastic follower was run on a collective basis without a manager. The staff were employed at a high level, just below the chief executive. When asked why it was decided that they work as a collective Emily explained:

So that we could challenge the kind of hierarchical power structure, the traditional way of working in local government, so we could demonstrate a different way of working that felt more comfortable to women rather than the kind of um traditional structures that the men seemed to really thrive on. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

She went on to recount the surprise of other council staff at their insistence on this arrangement, and the shared sense among the workers of the unit that working collectively would be an important way to remain strong in their position of challenge within the council as an organisation. The generous pay received by the women's unit staff Emily also outlined, reflected the status they were initially endowed with. The collective working as an approach can be seen as closely linked to the WLM, as discussed in previous chapters. I return to discuss this further in chapter eight, but for the present question of organising the collective working is also significant. This is because we can see from Emily's account the way the women's initiative used it as a tool to challenge and shape the council as an organisation. As mentioned before, this intention to change the council ties in with the aims of the WLM as a social movement.

From this collective base the women's initiative also sought to develop close working relationships alongside the other council departments, like the pioneering initiative. Emily recounted building strong links with staff in all different areas and levels of the council saying:

we had to identify allies, individual allies you know. Quite often departments would have a policy that seemed pretty good, but in terms of its implementation it was always about the individuals and so we had to find people, men and women, um who we could work with. And both so that we could be informed, because we could have a good open discussion with them, and um so we knew who we could quickly go to that could affect something that was happening... So we would get policies agreed, and then we would have people on side that were actively trying to make

those things happen and change. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

So again, as we saw with the pioneering council initiative, working collaboratively with other departments and individuals was seen as key to the success and influence of the enthusiastic follower women's initiative — i.e. integrating the concerns of the unit into the rest of the council's working. This was done in part through forging relationships with individuals — which was seen as vital in turning policy into practice. As I argued above, this stress on integration is important in evidencing its significance as a strategy pre-dating its explicit naming as part of gender mainstreaming.

Today the enthusiastic follower equalities team has retained its reasonably high status within the council, as evidenced by money being made available for them to undertake assessment as part of the Equality Framework for Local Government. This was something they had to work to persuade senior management to agree to, particularly during a period of spending cuts. One interviewee explained their upcoming peer assessment in 2011, and the higher value placed on evidence on equalities working drawn from different directorates as opposed to the equalities team as follows:

it's going to count for a lot more if it comes from the services. If it's written by us or it's our understanding of what they've done, it's not as good. What they're coming to test is is it coming from the horse's mouth...is a service manager in health and social care living and breathing this stuff? Do the stakeholders out in the community say that it stacks up for them? You know that's what matters, so that'll be the test. (Dot, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This ties together several strands of the development of gender equality working in the council, and also reflects several dimensions of the gender order. It demonstrates the status of the work, and the power of the unit's position, its symbolic recognition as important and integral to the norms of the council, and the significance of the division of labour within the organisation. This also links to the ongoing development of formal frameworks for development and evaluation which have become prevalent in the culture of both new public management and gender mainstreaming. It highlights again the importance of integration throughout the council, with evidence from workers outside the equality unit deemed more valuable in displaying the council's efficacy, because it represents the organisational dispersal of equalities work.

The enthusiastic follower council, in contrast to the pioneer, has also retained a centralised equalities unit which provides the foundation for work alongside and integrated with other departments. Having explained the way in which they work alongside different departments to integrate equalities, one interviewee went on to emphasise why having a central equalities team rather than equalities officers in different departments is so valuable:

It's very difficult to have an equalities officer with a knowledge of all six/seven equalities areas, whereas when you're in the central team we've got some people with a race equality background, some people with a lesbian gay and bisexual equality background, someone with a disability equality. And we find that we can back each other up with the specialisms...we still do a lot of consultation with groups, develop relationships, develop projects and do partnership working. And the departmental equalities officers don't do that so I think you get more for your buck if you have people in a team, when you can share the knowledge. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

Thus in the enthusiastic follower council today there is an emphasis on collaborative working, supported by the centralised equalities unit. This contrasts with the pioneering council where as discussed earlier, although work on gender equality has been spread throughout the organisation, the lack of a centralised unit impacts on the ability of workers to push forward the agenda. Another interviewee at the enthusiastic follower council also explained the importance of working collaboratively with the other departments of the council and the emphasis being placed on this by one of the council's new directors:

they're very clear that we should, we must not deliver equalities in isolation and we mustn't pick up the pieces of what other people are doing...But the flip side of that is there's a danger that, you're trying to get HR to develop a policy on transgender employees or whatever. They're not doing it, they're not doing it, you have umpteen meetings, they say they're going to do it, they put it in their work programme, it never materialises so you sit down one day and you say damn it, we're gonna write the policy yeah, we've written it we've consulted on it, there it is. And then a year down the line you still run into HR officers who say I didn't know we had a policy on that, because they don't own it. And I think this is a real tension — the new

director's view is there are things we will do because we should generate them as the experts in the authority. But most of our role should be about influencing other people to do it. Not doing it ourselves. (Dot, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This clearly explains the value of integrating work and knowledge of equality throughout different departments of the council for it to be meaningful. Without this, as Dot points out, it is possible that a well thought out policy won't even be known to exist by staff who should be using it. This interviewee also went on to discuss this in relation to their work outside the council, using the example of Black History month which they felt the equalities team should support people in the community to organise.

So although both the pioneer and enthusiastic follower council initiatives sought to work alongside other departments and integrate their approach throughout the council, the validity of having a central unit working specifically on equality has only been maintained in the enthusiastic follower. This difference is arguably connected to the initial collective basis on which the enthusiastic follower council's women's initiative worked. This is not to exclude other contributing factors from the equation, but this distinctive difference in the way the early initiatives were established appears to be significant. From the perspective of institutional theory, the idea of historicism would also support this. It also builds on Bashevkin's work which revealed the importance of the GLC's municipal feminist working for the later representation of women within the GLA.

Having said this it is also important to consider other possible explanations — one of which might be the influence of the councils' political make-up at the time the initiatives were formed, and subsequently. Political support for the work of early women's initiatives and indeed contemporary working is vital for its efficacy (as I discuss in more detail below). However, the political temperature of the councils does not appear to have been influential in this case. Today the pioneering council is ostensibly more left-wing than the enthusiastic follower — which is counterintuitive given the generally warmer relationship between the left and the equalities agenda as discussed in previous chapters. So this would make it counterintuitive that the enthusiastic follower then retained its equalities unit.

This difference between the two councils is also not explained by the changes which have taken place more generally within local government in the ensuing 30 years, such as the rise of performance management. However, one point which might be worth considering is time; the fact that the pioneering council developed its initiative four years prior to the enthusiastic follower. This could be significant in two ways. Firstly, one might suggest that the pioneering council has simply had more time to develop its working, and thus is further down the path of mainstreaming gender. So we could extrapolate from this to envisage that if we returned to the enthusiastic follower council in several years, it too would no-longer have a dedicated equality unit. Secondly, we might suggest that because the enthusiastic follower developed its working later, it would have had time to learn from the others which preceded it. This could be seen to have given it an advantage over its predecessor. It is difficult to rule out either of these considerations as factors in the difference between the organisation of the two initiatives and their present day equivalents. However, the organisation and form of the initiatives does seem to have had at least some significance in shaping the current working on gender equality in each council, and this is further supported when we turn to look at the late adopter council.

#### *Organisational Position and Form — Late Adopter*

In the late adopter council the women's initiative was established at the beginning of the 1990s without a high status position. It was not formalised as a committee or sub-committee, nor given a grants budget. This evidently did not place the unit in a position of power within the gender order of the council. This can also be observed in the way in which the workers faced reluctance from senior staff to acknowledge them as the women's unit, as one of my interviewees recounted:

Harriet: I mean even things like when I started, so I was the women's officer, and I had an admin officer and a clerical assistant. So I had started to call it the women's unit, as other people did, and it was like, you know the boss took me in and said, 'oh no, we didn't establish a women's unit you know'.

FJR: Who was that?



Harriet: That was the assistant chief exec, and it was kind of em, ‘it’s not a women’s unit!’ There was quite a bit of oh well, [laughs] we ended up that we actually had stickers that said [late adopter] women’s unit and we had boards, kind of display boards that were [late adopter] women’s unit because that was what people saw us as, but I think there was a feeling that it was a step too far, you know that was much more of a...

FJR: What was the connotation of a women’s unit?

Harriet: Feminist, yeah absolutely. So I think that was just a step too far. (Harriet, Women’s Officer, Late Adopter Council)

This account of resistance to the women’s unit reveals the working of informal institutions within the council to block change and minimise its power — the more senior staff member emphasising the ‘non-existence’ of the unit and thus its insignificance within the council as a whole. The terminology — women’s unit — was also imbued with a sense of feminism, and marked as something challenging to the senior council executive. This supports the argument which I develop further in chapter eight, that the initiatives operated in a way that intentionally challenged the councils they developed within.

In addition to lacking status and support from some senior workers, the staff of the late developer women’s initiative also faced great problems trying to work collaboratively within the council. One interviewee explained that they felt integrated working would have been the most effective way to bring about change — and indeed this style of working was key to the effectiveness of the other two initiatives, and remains central to their contemporary strategies. However, they went on to explain how resistance from other departments made this impossible to implement:

Barbara: they did it because they had to do it, they had to identify a rep — it was agreed that they had to do it, so they would do it. But progress that was made was...I don’t know I think it was quite limited...I felt that was really challenging, I just felt that people were paying lip service to it, and weren’t actually that interested in making a difference.

FJR: And how did that manifest itself in the way you would try to, can you paint me a picture of how you would try to make change in a department?

Barbara: I just remember being quite frustrated that, that being quite a frustrating bit of the work. I mean we went through the process of saying that someone had to be recommended, identified as the women's issue rep for that department, and that took forever to get people to identify somebody. So that was the start of the nightmare. And then when we actually got someone it was kinda, people would think it had to be a woman, and it was like well it doesn't have to be a woman, it has to be somebody that can help to look at moving forward this agenda. So that would quite often take ages as well, and then you would get someone and they were just completely inappropriate, it might be somebody very junior who didn't have any kind of say within their department, so they might have been the most senior woman but actually she was never going to have an impact in the department itself.

(Barbara, Women' Unit Worker, Late Adopter Council)

This painful account of organisational resistance, considered in relation to the different dimensions of the gender order, particularly highlights the emotional and the productive. Barbara was palpably frustrated and exhausted by the resistance she faced. Simultaneously, the work of the reps was marked as for women, and junior within the hierarchy. This part of our discussion is also poignant as the interviewee recognises that working collaboratively and in partnership with other council departments would have been a useful way to drive change — but that this was extremely difficult to enact at the time due to the attitudes of staff and structures of the council. So although seeing the same way of organising as important as the other initiatives, this was impossible to develop. This contrast with the other two councils highlights the need for multiple elements of equality working for it to be successful — a mixture of enforcement and collaboration — and the need for at least some status and support within the broader organisation to be able to enact this.

As with the other two sites I have examined, when we look at the contemporary picture in the late adopter council there are clear echoes of the difficulties faced by the initial women's initiative. Tricky resistance remains today to attempts to develop work on equalities. One interviewee explained the softly-softly approach needed today to convince colleagues as follows:

you have to find a little hook to maybe offer them a presentation on something that's relevant to their area, but bring equality into that and show them how equality is

relevant. And then suggest ways that they can develop that. You know training being an example, there wasn't any, training thing had all fallen by the wayside about five years ago, and very gradually by going to the trainers meetings, and then listening to what they were saying the first couple of times, and then kind of suggesting a bit of a presentation on equality with the upcoming legislation changes and would they be interested? Oh yes they would be, that would be good. And kind of doing that and then talking and eventually we got a little working group set up, from that working group that actually developed some new training materials. (Margot, Head of Corporate Equalities, Research and Consultation, Late Adopter Council)

This describes the great care and sensitivity with which Margot needs to introduce not particularly dramatic pieces of work to other colleagues, suggesting it could take years to achieve small gains. This gives a sense of equalities being very much on the fringes of the council's working, rather than normalised within the organisation. Although the council's documents suggest gender is something mainstreamed throughout its work, the reflections of the interviewees stand in stark contrast to this. The formation and difficulties faced by the municipal feminist initiative formed at the start of the 1990s appear to have affected its subsequent ability to develop its working and influence. Another interviewee expressed frustrations with the current lack of cooperation from areas of the council, for example in relation to training:

Dawn: So we have leadership training that's for anyone who would be grade nine and above, grade nine and above are predominantly male. So if you've got any promoted post then the people who have had the training to go for a promoted post are male. The barrier in terms of women's progression are, as I have identified through statistics, are sitting at grade seven and eight. So really we should be training our people, leadership training should be available to grade seven and eight so they've got equal access to promoted posts. Because there's no reason why a woman sitting doing a grade eight post couldn't apply for a grade nine post. And she can apply, our policies allow for it, there's absolutely no barrier. But then if you're sitting talking, have you done the leadership training which is a very comprehensive detailed training that was delivered to everybody at grade nine, then you're up against it. You're disadvantaged because you don't have that depth of experience, but also even just the circles that you're moving in, your networking, the meetings

that you get invited to, the strategic overview meetings... So what happened within the organisation we had some, we had paid for all these places and had some places available. So we then said does anybody at grade 8 want to do this? Now I then as soon as I heard that I went knocking at the door saying actually we should be offering these places to women at grade eight.

FJR: And what happened?

Dawn: Most of them were taken up by men.

FJR: Why do you think that was?

Dawn: Because it was left to managers, there was no selection criteria it was up to managers. (Dawn, Senior Human Resources Officer, Late Adopter Council)

Dawn was very clear that this dynamic perpetuated inequality within the organisation, but that she was limited in her ability to challenge it. She went on to recount how her attempts to explain this issue to colleagues in the organisational development department fell on deaf ears, as they did not see there was any problem. She described feeling that she was, 'banging my head against a brick wall', and being frustrated by not being able to convince others of the barriers to improving women's representation higher up the organisation. The initial part of this quotation reveals again the way in which institutions within the organisation (such as training regimes) could be modified to support gender equality, but in fact are rigidly maintained in opposition to attempts from the equality workers. Dawn then went on to describe the problems she faced given the lack of support for her work from the politicians and senior staff. She described examples where change was attempted, or started on a superficial level, only to be abandoned or not properly carried out. So the late adopter, lacking in many of the elements identified as important in the literature (such as political backing, external mobilisation, and organisational response) is still struggling to enact change in 2011.

Comparing my three council sites over time shows that the organisational position and form of the municipal feminist initiatives can be seen to correlate with the work on gender equality which takes place in each council today. Despite broader changes in the organisation of local government which have affected all three sites, the status of

gender equality work and its relationship to the council has a whole, including the extent to which it is mainstreamed and exists in a discrete unit, have endured.

*Public Engagement — Pioneering*

Having examined the significance of the organisational position and form of the municipal feminist initiatives for current working on gender equality, I now discuss the importance of their work to engage with the public, and how this has endured over time. As discussed in earlier chapters, Sylvia Bashevkin's study of London and Toronto concerned itself with the representation of women in the GLC and GLA eras of local government, pointing to the significance of the former for the latter. Other work which has examined municipal feminism has also highlighted the importance of external mobilisation to the success of women's initiatives. Both of these overlap with the idea of public engagement and consultation — which was a core part of the business of all three women's initiatives I examined. When it was formed at the start of the 1980s, the pioneering initiative gave considerable attention to seeking to democratise the council's working and reach out to members of the local community. For example, effort was made to ensure that the meetings of the women's committee were open, friendly and attended by a range of different women, as one of my interviewees recounted:

it wasn't like they were all sort of you know employees of one organisation and were all in this, people, erm, with all different sorts of agendas. And people would come from other sort of, I remember one time a whole load of occupational therapists coming because we were discussing their role in the council. Or another time another group of people coming from another part of the council you know...that time the GLC were doing it completely and the council was doing it as well, it was a sort of opening up and a democratisation really, of the council encouraging people to become involved. (Wendy, Women's Committee Chair, Pioneering Council)

This quotation reflects this concern with democratisation and connecting to the surrounding community, as well as linking this agenda to work that was happening in other councils, such as the GLC. Wendy's account reflects how different this approach was to previous ways of working in the council which she went on to mention, focused

on ‘old men’. Similarly, another interviewee spoke about the good and varied attendance at committee meetings:

so you had the councillors and then you had all these co-opted, and I can’t remember what voting rights they had but they were, they didn’t have voting rights but they were a pretty vociferous group. And I think we worked very hard to make the women’s committee, it was very well attended. (Rachel, Women’s Officer, Pioneering Council)

Rachel went on to discuss the other ways in which they sought to engage with the public recounting:

we did a lot on children and that’s where we were working really well with social services and there was stuff on toy libraries, playgroups, mobile libraries, resources and opportunities for women and kids. So all of those groups would be pretty anchored into the whole thing. Information service, translation things for you know facilities for families you know non-English speaking families. (Rachel, Women’s Officer, Pioneering Council)

The pioneering women’s unit also established a women’s centre with a shop front where women could come to attend events, find out information and advice, and contribute, as one interviewee remembered:

we actually set up a women’s centre. And we got premises and we got an information line and we did all of that. And I think every, virtually every women’s group under the sun in [pioneering council] was there at the launch. That was just lovely. It was that kind of, it was there’s a wonderful sense of being part of creating space for women. (Rachel, Women’s Officer, Pioneering Council)

So we can see the importance given to these efforts to connect with local women in a meaningful way, to serve them and to make the work of the women’s initiative (and indeed the rest of the council) accessible. Today the pioneering council still maintains links with the same women’s centre and uses it as a conduit to consult with women in the area as one interviewee explained:

we also commission them to be a voice in terms of where we want to hear, either because we want to have a view of something we’re planning to do — is this right.

Or for them to say there's this issue coming up you need to know about it. So much more of a dialogue really with those groups, um so yeah, so yes they are important. But they are important too, for getting in touch with us when we are doing things wrong and although it can be a bit, um, uncomfortable, it is important they do that and it's important we have those arrangements for where they can. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

Although Eleanor went on to provide examples of the way this insight helped the council in planning its services, she also pointed out that the lack of a centralised equality unit curtailed their ability to consult on issues in a holistic, cross-council manner, with consultation instead taking place within individual departments. In addition to this, the quality of consultation today is considerably different, and is no longer confined to local women. The centre may provide input to consultations, but is no longer the only focus for them. The process of consulting on its work is now also a required element of the council's business. In terms of specific consultation with women, the pioneering council does less now than the enthusiastic follower, which I will now discuss in more detail.

#### *Public Engagement — Enthusiastic Follower*

Following its inception in the mid-1980s the enthusiastic follower initiative carried out a very extensive and thorough programme of consultation and co-optation with local women, with the aim of democratising the council and connecting with the local population. One of my interviewees remembered the committee running a series of 13 public consultation events to discuss the priorities of women in the local area, and attending several of them herself. She remembered hundreds of women, and a few men attending and described them as follows:

all sorts, because the committee ran its consultation meetings in all sorts of places. So they went to the council estates, the community halls on the council estates and they went to church halls in other places. So they didn't have, they didn't feel like terribly formal council meetings, um because of where the committee met really. They were kind of outreach I suppose, so there would be women of all ages, um all nationalities and of all economic backgrounds really. Disabled women, um less

obvious to spot I guess is suppose but quite diverse in terms of sexual orientation and just a quite a good range, a good sample of women in the city. Some of them terribly well off and terribly nicely spoken, who still nevertheless talked about the glass ceiling and things at work, and health issues around women's health. And women who had very little talked about their poverty and lack of opportunity and issues around childcare and those kinds of things. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This quotation illustrates the great pains taken to consult with a wide range of women, rather than the 'usual suspects' who might have had the time, energy or enfranchisement to engage with local politics. Taking the council meetings out to different areas of the city was an important way of doing this. This attention to consulting with local women is something that has continued, albeit not in the same format. Of course, as mentioned before, consultation on its work is something councils must now routinely undertake (which I will discuss further in relation to legislative developments in chapter seven), but in the enthusiastic follower council the consultation specifically with women has remained remarkably constant. For example, there remains a specific group designed to represent the interests of women in the local area. One interviewee explained this to me:

the [enthusiastic follower] women's forum, which was an organisation set up to uh promote the interests of girls and women and give a representative voice where there wasn't one in local democracy. (Martha, Women's Forum Co-Chair, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

There has also been a women's conference held in previous years:

we had a big conference where we had real time voting and voted on what the primary issue, and then those issues were put into the community strategy. And then the aim was to have a recall conference. So it was nearly 4,000 women were involved in the consultation it was huge and we had very specific things about what women wanted to see happen. Um as I say they were included in the community strategy. And the idea was to have a kind of recall conference annually to say, so that the public bodies would report back on what they'd done in relation to what had been identified. Um but I lost my seat so the impetus for that to happen kind of



disappeared. And there was one recall conference later on about a year after. (Betty, Equality Consultant, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

It appears that although changed in format and context, the enthusiastic follower continues to put effort into engaging and consulting specifically with women in the local area — above and beyond the modes of public consultation which have become standard practice in local government more generally. Yet this quotation is also interesting in the way it highlights the significance of an individual, Betty, in relation to gains made, as well as their precarity. As Betty points out, when she was not reelected the conference ceased to take place.

### *Public Engagement — Late Adopter*

In terms of attempting to democratise the council's working and engage with the public, the municipal feminist initiative in the late adopter council did hold some meetings in outside locations. However, this was not nearly as extensive as in the other two councils. One interviewee explained that they did not have co-optees, but did organise meetings in the community:

When we went out we would do the committee business but then we would open the meeting to a general discussion and if anybody wanted to butt in when we were discussing a particular item, we would let them talk during the committee meeting, during the minutes bit of the meeting. So whenever we went out to the community people could get fully involved in what we were discussing. If there were decisions to be made they wouldn't be allowed to vote on it I don't think. But possibly we never actually came to a vote on our committee I don't think. (Margaret, Women's Advisory Group Chair, Late Adopter Council)

Margaret went on to explain that such open meetings would take place every six weeks in different locations, like community centres, and the unusualness of this practice. Today in the late adopter council there also appears to be much less working to consult with the public around equalities, and indeed in some cases a rather frustrated attitude towards working to consult with interest groups. This can be seen in the comments of one of my interviewees:

Fran: I mean there has been good aspects but what I would say is in [late adopter] we have a lot of women's services where the women have been there a long time and they always talk about 30 years ago we done this, and 30 years ago we did that. And when you try and introduce new ways of thinking it's a real struggle, it's a real struggle.

FJR: Like what sort of things, can you give me an example?

Fran: Em in the violence against women partnership we decided a couple of years ago we would have three em subgroups to actually do some work to improve the way things were done in [late adopter] and feed back to the partnership...And the statutory agencies would send along an officer, the voluntary sector either didn't send anybody or every time we had a meeting sent somebody different. And when we said to them we can't really do that because this is a working group, you've got to be able to take up a piece of work, go away, do it, come back the next meeting and say where you're at with it. And then we try and pull it all together so you can't just send different people all the time so they were saying and we understood this that because they've got small resources and they've got to deliver a service to women they couldn't always guarantee they would have somebody. (Fran, Senior Planning and Social Work Officer, Late Adopter Council)

She went on to discuss this problem with working with the voluntary sector as a recurrent issue, along with a lack of information sharing about the development of new projects. For example, a voluntary organisation had gained government funding to work on a related project without keeping other partners in the group abreast of this. She stressed that although some positive partnership work did take place, it was also limited by these problems. This illustrates a fairly negative and attitude and limited conception of consultation. Although Fran's frustration is understandable, it also appears that talking with those in the voluntary sector or the public is not deemed essential to the work taking place. We could also read this as reflecting a divide between the better resourced professional working of the council, and the voluntary sector, or activists outside. There are echoes here of contentious issues about ways of organising and professionalism raised within the WLM itself, as discussed in previous chapters. For example, rotating responsibility for roles rather than having fixed appointees can from one perspective be seen as a principle of participative working. Yet in this context the

lack of consistency it has brought is professionally frustrating for the council worker. In this case it does not seem that a particularly constructive relationship has been forged between those inside and outside the council, in comparison to the other two council sites I studied.

In all three sites, the pattern of investment in consulting with women in the community has remained over the intervening years. The enthusiastic follower council enacting this the most fastidiously of the three, followed by the pioneering and lastly the late adopter. Although I have analysed the interview data and documents from each council in relation to public engagement and consultation, it would also be interesting to consider the outcomes of these practices which would require further study. This would allow us to understand more fully the significance of these practices, when from a cynical perspective it would be possible for councils to consult without acting upon the results. In considering why the pattern of investment in public engagement seen in my three sites has endured over time, it seems likely that it is a product of the other characteristics of each initiative, rather than being an independent quality. Despite there clearly being limitations to public consultation as a means to influence and enact change in council working on gender equality, I would nonetheless highlight its significance more widely as a point of interaction between those inside and outside the council interested in equality. Several factors combine to make this the case. Firstly, as introduced earlier, there have been changes which mean equality workers are both stretched, and obliged to undertake consultation. Secondly, as I go on to show in the following two chapters, the knowledge and understanding of individual equality workers is very important for the interpretation and enactment of policy and legislation within the council. Thus, although far from a structural or national remedy, the scope exists for those ‘activists’ outside the council to add to this knowledge base through consultation. Of course this is also limited by the interests and capacity of those outside the council who have the knowledge to engage in the process.

All five dimensions of the initiatives I discussed — organisational position and form, work on issues internal to the council, work on issues external to the council, public engagement, and engagement in national networks — are interconnected. However, the organisational position and form of the initiatives is foundational to the other dimensions, as a structural element of them as institutions. This does not explain why three of the dimensions (work on issues internal to the council, work on issues external

to the council, and engagement in national networks) have not shown the same continuity over time. It is arguable that these areas are those which have been most affected (and indeed standardised) by the developments in legislation (which I discuss in chapter seven). This means that the differences between the sites are less immediately obvious in these areas.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter I have argued for the significance of municipal feminist working in shaping the characteristics of the work taking place today on equalities in my three case study sites. This contributes to the argument I wish to advance regarding the organisational legacy of both the WLM and municipal feminist women's initiatives. The municipal feminist initiatives I examined reflected the spectrum of developments that were documented in the literature of the period, in terms of their organisation and form, their internal and external working, their engagement with the public and connection to work related networks. By following and comparing the working on gender equality taking place in the same locations today, I was able to show that distinctive elements present from the inception of the initiatives remain. This is despite the common changes brought about by developments external to the women's initiatives — such as changes to the management and organisation of local government. These enduring elements can be seen in the organisational position and form of the working on gender equality, and in their work on public engagement and democratisation. By comparing the three sites I have suggested that some of the differences between them in terms of their gender equality working today, can be seen to reflect specific characteristics of the earlier working in each location. Utilising tools developed from a historical institutionalist approach, as well as Connell's conception of gender, can help to unpick the complexity of change and continuity in each site. In the pioneering council I suggested that the early attempts of the women's initiative to disperse and integrate their work throughout the council has contributed to how it is organised today. That is, the at least outwardly full enactment of gender mainstreaming, and the disbanding of a discrete equality unit. This is not to say that this facet of the institution of gender equality working within the pioneering council is particularly resilient or contingent, but that this drive to integrate, in conjunction with trends in the management of local

government, theorising about gender equality, and funding cuts, has meant that this shift in working has taken place more readily than in the other two sites. Similarly, in the late adopter council I would not seek to argue that it was inevitable following the lowly beginnings of the women's initiative, that today it should still lag behind in terms of broader integration within the council or public engagement. However, it seems plausible to suggest that although the working on gender equality has moved with wider trends towards mainstreaming and integrated equalities, and less specific public engagement with women, the inauspicious beginnings of the women's initiative has meant there has been no alternative bedded in to the council to moderate these tendencies.

The following chapter builds on this discussion of the practical changes in gender equality working to consider the ways in which the underlying understandings of gender, equality, diversity and mainstreaming within the councils have changed over time.

## **6. From Woman to Gender: Mapping the Conceptual Shifts in Local Government Working**

### *Introduction*

The previous chapter considered practical developments in local government gender equality working, and changes in this since the early 1980s when municipal feminist initiatives were being created. I now move on from this to examine the conceptual understanding underpinning this in my three council sites, in order to continue building an account of how feminist ideas have filtered through and been animated in the context of local government. The question focusing this chapter asks how contemporary gender equality working compares to municipal feminism conceptually. This is an artificial separation between theory and practice, particularly as I pointed out earlier the initiatives were not created in a systematic way to follow from a particular theory or set of theories. I am interested in considering the way in which the initiatives and their workers make sense of the topics they address. In exploring this I examine in detail the ways in which both the individuals and the official documents of each council understand the subject of their work, and how this has changed over time since the inception of the initiatives. Firstly, I consider the subject of the gender equality working — i.e. what does gender, equality and indeed gender equality mean? I show how, although on one level working has shifted from focusing on the subject woman to focusing on gender, this does not necessarily reflect a deeper understanding of gender inequality as complex and structural. In addition, I explore the changes which have taken place in terms of conceptualising equality, and the important role played by the workers in interpreting this. Secondly, I discuss how gender is understood in relation to other strands of equalities working, through the ideas of diversity and intersectionality. In doing so I highlight the considerable differences between the three council sites, and how this has changed over time. Lastly, I consider what gender mainstreaming means in the context of each council. I show how key elements of mainstreaming, developed around the same time as the women's initiatives were developed, have actually been present to some extent since this period. This is despite the fact that within the municipal feminist initiatives, the terminology of mainstreaming was not explicitly present. In contrast, the terminology of mainstreaming is clearly evident in the

contemporary gender equality working, although practice has changed. In comparing the two eras we can see how over time the emphasis on the different elements within mainstreaming has changed, which has consequences for the topics and organisation of work that can take place within local government. This chapter contributes to the broader argument I wish to put forward: that discourses about gender and equality change over time, but are not necessarily synchronised with local government understanding or practice.

### *The Subject of the Municipal Feminist Initiatives*

Across all three sites of local government, the subject of the municipal feminist work was clearly woman rather than gender, in both council documents and interviews. For example, the 1982 terms of reference from the pioneering council's initiative state they are working to, 'ensure that the promotion of women's rights, welfare and interests are primary considerations in all aspects of the council's work and services'. In the enthusiastic follower similarly, the 1986 terms of reference state they are seeking to secure, 'equal opportunities and equal treatment for women'. This suggests an understanding of the issue to be dealt with as inequality between the sexes, men and women, primarily focused on supporting and promoting women's position in terms of the council as an employer and service provider. Having said this, there are also examples from the interviews which reflect a more complex understanding of the subject of their work, closer to an academic definition of gender as something structural, relational and variant as I introduced in chapter three (Connell, 2002). For example, one interviewee from the pioneering council's initiative recounted of the early 1980s:

I believed in equality, gender equality and re-examining gender roles of both men and women, and questioning the assumptions that were made about what it meant to be a woman. (Wendy, Women's Committee Chair, Pioneering Council)

This reflects an understanding of the work as about gender, something relating to both men and women, but not inherent to them as sexed subjects. The mention of gender roles also motions towards role theory as a way of understanding the reproduction of inequality. Although the idea of role theory may now be dated, it nonetheless suggests a more structural understanding of the issue as relating to the organisation of society.

Along similar lines another interviewee Rachel commented, ‘I came at that women’s movement stuff from a social justice framework’ (Rachel, Women’s Officer, Pioneering Council). This positioning of women’s equality within broader working for a more equal, socially just society also suggests the issue is structural and relational — rather than just being about women. Another example of the municipal feminist interviewees talking in terms of women, but seeing the issues as complex and structural, is illustrated by a comment from Harriet who worked in the late adopter council, ‘I absolutely believe that the way our society is organised mitigates against women’s equality’ (Harriet, Women’s Officer, Later Adopter Council). This again reflects the idea that social structures position women unequally to men, and any solution thus needs to be systemic rather than individual. Across all three of my sites, the documents from the municipal feminist initiatives at the point they were created reflect an understanding of the issue as being about women, rather than gender. However, the interviewees from this period, although also focusing on women and issues important to them, expressed a more structural understanding of the problems being worked on, closer to the account of gender discussed in earlier chapters. So in this context, the subject woman was being stretched to include a range of issues, including men, and to represent a structural problem rather than something individual women are responsible for addressing. This could facilitate the expansion of the areas being worked on by the women’s initiatives, as well as validating their holistic examination of the councils’ organisation.

### *The Subject of the Contemporary Gender Equality Work*

Moving forward in time I now consider the subject of the councils’ contemporary work in this area. On a surface level it is evident in the documents across all three council sites that the subject in 2011 is gender. This is illustrated in the following extract from the pioneering council’s gender equality scheme for 2011 to 2014:

we will collect information through surveys or other methods and analyse these by gender. Where there are unjustifiable disparities between men and women, targets will be set and an action undertaken to address them.

However, we can see from this that gender is being applied to mean men and women, and not necessarily to denote anything more complex. So the terminology has changed,



but arguably without increasing the analytic power of the conceptual understanding it reflects. Similarly the late adopter council's latest integrated equality scheme, for 2008 to 2011 states:

we published an equal pay policy statement in Sept 2007 and have designed and implemented a pay, grading and benefits structure that is free from gender bias.

In this reference the text is arguably referring to sex rather than gender, as the rest of the document does not go on to unpick further the idea of the pay and grading structure being without 'gender bias'. So for example, it does not go on to consider the way that certain sorts of work, or working arrangements, are gendered as opposed to simply done by men or women. This suggests the move from thinking about women to thinking about gender has not necessarily brought with it a more complex understanding of inequality, even if it has enabled greater discussion of men. Having said this, the picture is certainly complicated. For example, the pioneering council's latest gender equality scheme, for 2011 to 2014 states, 'The term "gender" refers to the wider social roles and relationships that structure men's and women's lives', and, 'Gender inequality exists in all aspects of society and refers to lasting and embedded patterns of advantage and disadvantage'. In some ways this definition of gender and gender inequality begins to point towards the idea of structural inequality related to men and women, and beyond sex. However, there are other points within the texts, and indeed the interviews, which undermine this. For example, in the gender equality scheme, domestic violence is in a separate section to 'violence against women and girls'. This is presumably because the council's statistics show a proportion of domestic violence involves male victims. However, it seems strange that no explicit link is made between domestic violence and violence against women and girls when the majority of domestic violence within the council's population, and more widely, is perpetrated by men against women, and when gender is at play in both cases. Of course there is a balance to be struck between employing more nuanced conceptual frameworks, and acknowledging the practical reality of local experience. However, in this case it appears that the former can work to mask the latter if not carried out carefully. So it could be argued that gender has been shrunk in this context: there is not really a structural analysis of gender inequality being applied, which might attempt to consider the complexity of patterns of domestic violence, nor a retention of sex or woman as a referent for the work. These different inflections within the texts also illustrate the multiplicity possible within a single

council site. This reflects the insights of Franzway et al. (1989) and Kantola (2006) discussed in earlier chapters, regarding the state as internally differentiated rather than monolithic. This differentiation also supports the argument I develop in subsequent chapters: that the gender equality workers and initiatives blur the boundaries between the state and feminist movement.

This sense of gender having been shrunk is maintained when we consider the interview data. One interviewee currently working in the pioneering council discussed the council's workforce, downplaying the significance of vertical segregation within it because the workers are predominantly women. He explained:

if you look at male/female, these are obviously the directors — the very senior people, there actually is a slight imbalance there. But then if you go down, if you look at it at virtually every level you've got more women than men. But obviously you could argue there's too many women at the lower levels because there should be — although it's a good thing there are so many — they're actually, that's about three times what it is for men and that's the lowest sort of pay level if you like. But broadly speaking, it's um you know it's fairly positive. (Antony, Human Resources Manager, Pioneering Council)

This interviewee may be trying to put a positive spin on the situation while being interviewed by an outsider. Yet it does appear that the way work within the council is gendered, such as the types and status of work done by men and women, might not be fully understood.

In the enthusiastic follower council today there is also a mixed picture in terms of how gender equality is understood. On the one hand, there is a thorough definition in the latest single equality scheme, for 2010 to 2013, which states that:

equality of opportunity is essential in creating a fairer society where everyone has the same chance to fulfill their potential, to participate fully in the economic and social life of the community and have access to the services they need...equality of opportunity is summarised in terms of equal access, equal treatment and equal outcomes.

This moves beyond a liberal understanding of equality to incorporate the importance of both equal opportunity and outcomes, as well as recognising that equal treatment

does not mean identical treatment. On the other hand, when we examine the equality indicators listed within the documents from this council, only one is explicitly linked to women, with two linked to LGBTI issues, two linked to domestic violence, and one linked to men working in health and social care. Thus gender does not seem to be explored in great thoroughness or prioritised highly within the work being undertaken. This provides an example of the gap which can exist between different stages of a gender regime — in this case between the understanding of the problem stated in the policy statement, and the formal indicators being measured and reported on. In this case the understanding of gender equality has been shrunk in the process of defining the equality indicators.

The equality indicators also illustrate the way over time, although the subject has shifted from woman to gender (with varying degrees of significance), gender itself has in some ways been hollowed out and separated from issues previously seen as connected to women. Sexuality and domestic violence are examples of this. On the one hand this could be viewed positively, given that these are certainly not ‘women’s issues’ in the sense of being only of concern to them. On the other hand, if the separation means that the connections between these different areas are less easily seen and addressed in concert, it could be negative. This shrinking and fixing of gender through the process of its codification in policy texts and business plans, is also discussed in the following chapter in relation to legislation.

The interviewees at the enthusiastic follower council added greatly to the understanding reflected in the documents, showing a clearer understanding of gender inequality as something complex and structural in comparison to the pioneering council. For example:

you’re constantly challenging people or trying to get them to think about that. I mean I have these debates all the time you know, when people say things like, oh it’s unfair on men that the retirement age is higher, or it’s unfair on men that they’ve always had to wait longer to get their free bus pass and whatever, and that’s the only bit they see. And you say well did you know the pay gap, the income gap for women over the, you know [FJR: Over the lifecourse?] is like 40% of men in older age and you know, do you realise most women haven’t got a decent pension because...and they’re like oh, oh I don’t want to think about that, you know it’s all about the

simplistic equalisation of the ages. So you know I think things like that, I mean I was shocked when I came to [enthusiastic follower council] that there wasn't a rape crisis centre, so I do like to think that I played some part in backing the person who came forward from the community to make that case, doing the research, working with [X] to get money out of the safer [enthusiastic follower] budget to commission that. (Dot Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This reflects the understanding of the current workers at the enthusiastic follower council that equal treatment does not necessarily mean identical treatment. It also makes clear that a broad range of factors are considered and explained when they seek to convince others of the validity of their work on gender equality. This knowledge suggests the potential is there for the account of gender equality in the documents to be stretched by the workers as they strive to implement the aims and indicators of the council.

In contrast to the enthusiastic follower council, the contemporary texts from the late adopter council present a somewhat confused account of gender equality. In the transition to generic rather than specific equalities work it appears that gender hasn't been particularly well incorporated. There are points where the generic equalities agenda is framed in such a way as to make it seem as though they aren't actually including gender or sex. For example in their latest equality policy the council's diversity is stated to be a strength yet there is, 'evidence of discrimination, inequality and hostility towards minority groups'. Of course neither women nor men are a minority group, meaning inequality between them is excluded from this statement, as is the idea of gender, or inequality as a cross-cutting structural issue. Another extract from the equality policy discussing the reason why the council needs an equality policy states, 'the population increasingly includes people from many different backgrounds'. Again, although this arguably reflects the increasing attention being given to the idea of diversity (which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter), and being attentive to the needs of different 'communities', this individualised idea of background does not capture the idea of inequality between men and women, or the issue of gender. Coupled with this, the interviewees currently working at the late adopter council did not necessarily seem to have the knowledge to counteract this in practice. For example, one interviewee appeared to equate work on gender solely with issues around domestic

violence, sexual violence and related matters of child protection. They also appeared to attribute women's involvement in prostitution to individual factors, saying that some:

don't have the education to have the self-esteem to say I'm not going to do that I'm going to do something else. And they're quite vulnerable. And when I say the education, I don't just mean they've left school with a couple of O levels or whatever, they're just not being brought up in a way that you would say is being reinforced to them about respect yourself, respect others, whatever else, they've maybe been abused, sexually or physically when they were young children. (Fran, Senior Planning and Social Work Officer, Late Adopter Council)

Although intended to be sympathetic, this understanding of sex work seems quite dated, and without much understanding of the factors which might lead women to make such choices beyond being, 'vulnerable' and lacking, 'self-esteem'. This extract seems to suggest the remedy is down to individual women rather than structural change. It also does not consider those who benefit from sex work in different ways as customers or pimps.

Using the data from my three council sites I have examined the terminological shift which has taken place since the municipal feminist initiatives were first created during the 1980s. This has mapped the way in which the subject of the initiatives has shifted from woman to gender. In doing so I have argued that this shift has not necessarily been paralleled by a deepening understanding of gender and gender inequality, for example, seeing gender as referring to something more than both sexes. I have laid out the way the patterns of change vary both within the individual councils, for example between the texts and the workers, and between the different councils. This evidences the meaningful space between the understanding of the subject contained within the documents, and contained within the workers themselves. In some cases the subject woman does not appear to have been replaced with a meaningful account of gender. It is also interesting to consider this evidence in relation to academic debates which have taken place about the loss of the subject within theorising of feminism and gender. Although there are examples from my data which would appear to support the idea that the loss of the subject woman has been detrimental to the work taking place within the local government initiatives, I would suggest that this is by no means inevitable. Instead there appear to be several factors which interact with the shifting terminology to affect

its outcome. Firstly, the knowledge of the individual workers within each council is important. I have shown the way in which the understanding of some of my interviewees, both past and present workers, enables them to stretch and bend the formal policy texts in such a way that adds nuance and scope to their development of, and advocacy for, work on gender equality within the councils. This point is one which I return to in subsequent chapters as I move specifically to consider the role of knowledge in the interpretation of national legislation, and in relation to feminism. Secondly, the extent to which the subject of the initiatives is framed more broadly as individualised is important. This appears to limit the extent to which the subject, whether woman or gender, can be seen as interconnected with other areas of work, and inequality addressed on a basis beyond the individual. So the changes in terminology codified in the documents of the councils are neither necessarily reflective of changes in conceptual understanding, nor necessarily detrimental to the work that can take place on gender equality.

### *Equality in the Municipal Feminist Era*

None of the available documents from the inception of the three municipal feminist initiatives explicitly define what is meant by equality. However, examining the language they use to describe their aims and actions, it is possible to gain insight into how they conceived of this concept. I found five interconnected elements which contribute to the municipal feminist initiatives' accounts of equality, and are present to different degrees in all three sites. These are: the removal of discrimination, equal opportunity, equal treatment, having specific needs and concerns attended to, and supportive measures to achieve equality.

On a basic level, the idea that equality entails being free from discrimination was present in the municipal feminist texts. Yet when we consider the interview data, this element of the municipal feminist working is stressed more in the late adopter council than in the other two, perhaps reflecting the generally less progressive approach of that council in relation to the initiative. For example, when I asked how one of my interviewees at the late adopter council had become interested in women's equality issues she responded:

I think just because it affects you I think. I mean I suppose class issues were important 'cos as I say from where I came from. And then as I progressed through life, I mean you can just see that women are treated differently, and not well at times you know. (Barbara, Women' Unit Worker, Late Adopter Council)

The most common way in which equality was directly mentioned was via the notion of equal opportunities. For example, the terms of reference of the enthusiastic follower initiative state that one of its aims was, 'securing equal opportunities and equal treatment for women'. However, as discussed in earlier chapters, the exact meaning of 'equal opportunity' is open to interpretation — and it can be stretched or shrunk depending on who is defining and enacting it. I considered whether the municipal feminist initiatives considered equal opportunity to entail identical treatment, or equal outcomes. There were elements within the texts suggesting an understanding of equality that does not entail identical treatment. For example, a policy statement on women and equality from 1991 in the late adopter council states, 'this council is committed to pursuing equality for women by promoting their particular needs and interests'. This idea of attending to the particular needs of women, and providing relevant services was something widespread in the texts. In addition to this, there were points where it appeared to be recognised that women might need different treatment to men in order to gain equality. An example of this was supportive measures for women to enable them to more easily take up job opportunities. Having said this, the idea of equal outcomes was not explicitly mentioned, suggesting this was not named as a measure of equality.

Representation was another of the other main ways in which the idea of equality was expressed in the municipal feminist documents. This also links to the idea of women's interests and the provision of relevant services. This was particularly evident in the interviews at the enthusiastic follower council, where among other things we discussed the development of all women shortlists:

We'd met the SPD in Germany who said to us look it didn't matter, we had them on a platform that we ran in the Labour Party conference in Blackpool, and they said to us look it doesn't matter what the voting system is, unless you change the rules of the party to ensure that the only choice is a woman, then you won't get women elected. Voluntarism doesn't work. And after that we then started campaigning for all women shortlists and it had taken us I think seven years of utter reasonableness

to kind of get to a position. Once you adopt that position of all women shortlists it's the right position because of course there's lots of political choices between women, and women are, you know there's just the same political choices between women and they're just as good as men. You're just saying look you've got to pick a woman, but what that did of course we sort of stood in the way of the ambitions of lots of men. So that was another reason why the women's movement allied with the women's organisation in the Labour Party both at local government level and at national level in the party began to be taken apart. (Tabitha, Women's Committee Chair, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This clearly supports positive action to ensure women were represented within the political side of the council, and beyond this within its staff and working. It also provides a flavour of the alliances and disjunctures possible between the women's initiatives, the feminist movement, and the left. This was one of my interviewees who was a councillor, as opposed to a worker in the women's initiative. However the workers too expressed the same concern with representing the views of women as widely as possible within the council. This was also evident in the discussion in the previous chapter about attempts to democratise the working of the councils through consulting with women and co-opting them onto the women's committees.

### *Equality in the Contemporary Era*

In the documents from the current council working, the idea of equal opportunity was still present, although predominantly in the pioneering and late adopter councils. For example, the 2011 to 2014 gender equality scheme from the pioneering council stresses its duty to promote, 'equality of opportunity between men and women'. The late adopter council referred to equal opportunities for everyone, reflecting the move to generic equalities. However, it is not specified how this might be acted upon. The idea of access to relevant services is still present within the contemporary documents, for example the 2011 annual report on equalities and community cohesion in the enthusiastic follower council states the aim to be, 'delivering accessible and appropriate services to equalities communities and narrowing the gap of disadvantage'. However, we can see here that equality is presented in generic terms rather than in relation to gender or women. This also illustrates the increasingly prevalent notion of 'communities' which I discussed



above in relation to the late adopter council. We might question the appropriateness of this notion for considering gender equality.

The sense that equality means being free from discrimination has shifted in the decades since the inception of the municipal feminist initiatives. In particular, the idea of equality of outcome is now more evident. This reflects the argument made by Anne Phillips (2004) that equal outcomes should be viewed as the measure of equal opportunity. An example of equal outcomes being used in this way can be found in the 2011 to 2014 gender equality scheme of the pioneering council where it states:

Our scheme is about ensuring that Council services are delivered fairly to all — whatever their gender — and that we have a balanced workforce where male and female staff are treated equitably. Where men and women, boys and girls have particular needs or where there are particular barriers we take targeted action.

The idea of a ‘balanced workforce’ here suggests men and women are represented in numbers reflecting the population more broadly — one way in which the idea of equality of outcome is being connected to the idea of representation and service provision. This is arguably a positive way in which the idea of equality is being stretched within the councils. We can see how the performance management agenda can align with equalities in a productive way; to provide good services to the public, our workforce should be representative of the public, and this means taking action to ensure it does (and measuring this). As I discuss in the following chapter, this is also connected to the legislative changes which have taken place since the 1980s. The documents from the enthusiastic follower council also referred explicitly to measureable outcomes as the following extract from its 2010 to 2013 integrated equality scheme illustrates:

The new Single Equality Scheme will focus on achieving outcomes for equalities communities. This means the success of the scheme will be measured by whether people from equalities communities are employed in the same numbers as other people and whether there is improved satisfaction or higher uptake of services.

Here again we can see a strong and clear statement that means equal outcomes in measureable terms are the aim of the work on equalities. It is positive that this makes it easier to hold the council to account for its actions, in comparison to the idea of equal opportunities alone. The idea of equal outcomes is also positive as it places the

responsibility on the council, rather than on individuals, to take action. The idea of equal outcomes being integral to equality was also supported by the interviews. One interviewee in the pioneering council explained:

When I was head of the social inclusion and justice division, it was about setting up processes for monitoring opportunity of outcomes, not just about opportunity but who's actually benefiting from resources and is there a gender imbalance or not. So it's about measuring that and having a performance framework around equalities. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

Having said this, although the focus on measurable outcomes is useful in being able to mark progress and hold the council to account, it also has limitations. For example, it raises questions about how outcomes are measured, how this in itself might affect the agenda of the council, and indeed the issues which might be valuable to work on but which cannot be or are difficult to measure. This is particularly relevant given the period of cuts to council resources taking place while I carried out my fieldwork, and the broader pattern of decreasing resources for equalities work during this period. It is possible to see how, when faced with choices between different areas of equality work, it is more likely those with clearly and easily measurable outcomes will be prioritised. This also connects to the legislative developments and their interpretation discussed in the following chapter. Among other things I will discuss the lack of guidance available for prioritising work on the different strands of equalities, including the implications of this for gender.

The texts and interviews from the contemporary sites generally reflect an understanding that equal treatment does not entail identical treatment. As the 2011 to 2014 gender equality scheme from the pioneering council states, 'where men and women, boys and girls have particular needs or where there are particular barriers we take targeted action'. Similarly in the enthusiastic follower council's 2007 guidance on equalities impact assessments it states:

Impact assessments challenge the assumption that policies affect everyone in the same way, by detecting and assessing any adverse effect on a particular group before the policies are introduced. The assessment allows the council to make sure that different groups are equally and appropriately served by the policy.

This clearly explains the function of equality impact assessments as a tool with which to challenge the normative approach of the council. This is essential to the role of the workers in both time periods. In the late adopter council too its equality policy explains that:

The term 'equality' does not simply mean treating everyone the same. It means understanding and tackling the different barriers to equal opportunities for different groups of people.

This reflects an understanding of the need for tailored rather than identical treatment to address inequality, and indeed that 'the norm' is not neutral. Having said this, it goes without saying that this textual understanding is not necessarily the same as that being enacted. Indeed, the interviews further complicate this understanding of equality, as it is not clear that all the interviewees shared the understanding of the texts. This is particularly the case in the late adopter council in comparison to the other two sites. One of the interviewees in the late adopter council appeared to see inequality as inevitable, and equality issues as synonymous with any problems that arose within their work. In contrast to this, in the enthusiastic follower council there was clear evidence from the interviewees that they were knowledgeable about the way attempting to deliver equality to multiple groups could lead to conflicts. For example:

And I feel that particularly equalities impact assessments and this data analysis has made it harder for us to justify sustaining a gender equality agenda, because women on the face of it don't have as high needs as some of the other equalities communities, don't have the same, the same consistency of experience of disadvantage as some other communities. And I've talked to other equalities officers in other areas to sort of say how do you sustain a women, a gender focus, when the data tells you women are the majority users, women are the majority employees and um you know they've said that yes it is difficult but we just sustain projects. So I just think that gender these days is a little bit out on a limb because of the focus on data and justification and evidence base and things. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

Although this individual is obviously working to create new ways of working on gender and the multiple equalities strands, the way she refers to discussing this with other councils suggests there is not necessarily explicit or consistent guidance on how

to integrate the different strands together, nor arbitrate between them. I return to discuss this further in the following chapter. This interviewee went on to explain how they worked to look at the experience of particular groups of, for example, ethnic minority women, or very specific areas of inequality, such as vertical segregation, as a way to justify continuing attention to inequality between men and women. They also explained how attention to women and attention to men could sit slightly uncomfortably. For example comparing the need to attend to the number of female senior engineering staff, versus the number of male staff in under-fives care, there is no clear or obvious method for resolving this. In this way, we can see the interplay between different understandings of how to analyse and address gender inequality, and strategising to do this in the space between the council as an organisation and activists outside it.

There is quite considerable variation in the understanding of equality across the three councils, although there are shared elements between them. Arguably the most significant shift between the inception of the municipal feminist initiatives and the current equality working is the increasing focus on equality of outcome as well as equality of opportunity, coupled with the idea that equal treatment does not mean identical treatment. The implications of this are double-edged, on the one hand focusing work on concrete, measurable outcomes that can be evaluated. On the other hand, making more complex or less quantitative elements of inequality difficult to legitimise working on. As I have also shown, akin to the subject of the equality work, there is considerable scope for interpretation in the enaction by the workers of the account of equality within the texts. This again reinforces the significance of the level of knowledge maintained at the sites in the workers themselves.

### *Complicating the Subject — Diversity and Intersectionality*

Diversity is relevant in two main senses for the analysis within this chapter. On the one hand, the extent to which women are thought of as a diverse group is significant in thinking about the subject of gender equality work and how this has changed over time. On the other hand, diversity as in the ‘turn’ to diversity within institutions in relation to equalities (Ahmed and Swan, 2006), presents another point of reference when thinking about how the local authorities in my study conceptualise and situate their working on

gender equality. The politics and shortcomings of diversity in this sense has been discussed extensively, but it is generally promoted as being more inclusive in the way that it does not name specific categories (such as ethnicity or gender) (Ahmed and Swan, 2006). In this sense it speaks to both the drives to complicate the category women, as well as to a fundamentally more anti-categorical approach to equalities. Its openness to multiplicity thus reflects some of the concerns of those seeking to work on equalities from an intersectional perspective. The concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) originated from activist critiques of the feminist movement by women of colour (Ferree, 2011). Although it has subsequently been debated, developed and applied in a rich multitude of directions (McCall, 2005, Lutz et al., 2011), it fundamentally seeks to understand the multi-dimensional and varied ways in which inequalities are created, sustained and interact. This is relevant to this thesis in various ways. Firstly, as it exemplarises the relationship between activism, theory and debates within feminism. Secondly, as the issues it addresses were topical for municipal feminist initiatives and their relationship with other equality work taking place, as well as the present day equality working of the councils.

As the focus of this thesis is on gender equality, in this section I focus on considering how the councils have dealt with women's diversity, along with the extent to which they attempt to integrate gender into a diversity agenda, or undertake to think about how this intersects with other equality strands. In the following chapter the discussion of understanding and addressing different areas of inequality continues, considered in relation to the legislation that has sought to codify this.

Of the three sites, the early adopter council's initiative showed the greatest consideration of women's diversity as a group, and evidence of attempting to analyse and deal with the intersection of different inequalities, such as race and sex. For example, its 1982 terms of reference state that the equalities work aimed for the, 'abolition of any council practices or policies which discriminate against women on the grounds of sex, race, sexuality or disability'. So it was evident that from the inception of the initiative it aimed to think broadly about different areas of inequality. They also document the establishment of different women's groups for council staff, including disabled and lesbian women, the establishment of an Asian women's centre, and the need to consider the needs of older women. The texts from this period also reveal attempts to undertake intersectional analysis in relation to sex, race and socio-economic

status. For example they discuss the analysis by the women's unit of employment data for the council's 8,000 workers, revealing how sex and race interacted. This describes their findings of horizontal and vertical segregation, and the way in which this was particularly compounded for black and minority ethnic women.

The interview data revealed differing levels of attention to women's diversity and intersectionality between the three sites. This was illustrated by one interviewee talking about how the work was about women, but women situated within a broader social justice agenda including issues of race, class, and citizenship. Another interviewee revealed their understanding of the need to think intersectionally about equalities work, yet as the following quotation shows, described organisational tensions around undertaking this. She recounted that there were clear divisions between the race and women's committees during the 1980s, and when asked why she thought this was answered:

It's difficult to say really. I think that was to do with the whole cultural, religious and you know belief structure of those people involved in that team. But in terms of the women's unit we were very much aware that black and minority ethnic women were more severely disadvantaged in some areas of society and life, that we were trying to refer on, but it was seen as, well that's your, you're the women's unit you deal with it, kind of thing. So we did, so we did...I still think that's an issue, I still think that was an issue, I still think in this current day there are Equalities Act and whatever I still think that equalities strands are seen in silos, they're not looked across. When we talk about race, we talk about it as though there was a thing called you know this category this type of community, when they're not. (Geraldine, Women's Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)

This is interesting also as it reveals the way in which a desire to think about equalities holistically also requires collaboration with other units and departments, which would not necessarily be straightforward. Although this was evidently not an uncontroversial aspect of the women's unit's work, it was certainly being considered and to some extent acted upon. Of course, consider does not mean act on, and more generally this sits within a picture of the WLM, feminism, and local government where issues of race and gender could be at the nexus of conflict. However, to really understand this more fully

an examination of the other initiatives is required, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

In the enthusiastic follower council, the documents from the inception of the women's initiative in the mid-1980s do not refer so clearly to the multiplicity of women. However, there is documentation of thorough attempts to consult with women from different areas of the local authority and also to co-opt local women onto the committee as representatives of different 'types' of women (for example lesbian or BAME) reflecting some understanding of women's diversity. This was also borne out in the interviews. For example one interviewee reflected on the need to ensure the working of the unit did not only connect to middle-class women saying:

there were discussions, I mean for me what was important was to keep the link with women across the city, you know not to be too kind of academic about it, you know not to do but to actually keep you know what were the issues and concerns of women you know in [X] and some of the estates and so on, keeping that kind of side of it as well as campaigning on the more, not academic but more kind of general issues as well. So we had to make sure that those links were there, erm, and so that it didn't seem to be something that was very you know, just kind of middle-class women being you know interested in their own issues. (Betty, Equality Consultant, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This interviewee went on to explain how much this had been discussed, and what they had done to enact this. For example, by making connections to different groups in the area, and including this as a consideration when writing job descriptions for the unit. Another interviewee also referenced the significance of ethnicity in relation to feminism and their work saying:

I wouldn't presume to know how they would describe themselves, I think actually what's feminism to an African-Caribbean woman might be different to a white woman you know. (Tabitha, Women's Committee Chair, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

However, unlike the early adopter council, there did not appear to be explicit evidence of the enthusiastic follower women's initiative moving towards intersectional analysis in their working. Although there were references to inequality relating to race and

ethnicity, or disability, how these might interact with or compound other inequalities was not discussed. The pioneering council did, and does have, the most diverse population in relation to ethnicity, perhaps making this a topic that was likely to be at the forefront of engagement with the work of the women's initiative.

The late adopter council showed still less attention to both women's diversity and the intersection of sex with different equalities strands. Of the documents available from the inception of the initiative at the beginning of the 1990s there was no reference to women's diversity as a group and the significance this might have for the council's working. However, the interview data did suggest that the municipal feminist workers were conscious of women's differing needs. For example, one interviewee discussed their consciousness of needing to provide resources to the women with greatest need i.e. in areas of socio-economic deprivation. Having said this, there was also discussion of the failure to undertake joint working with the race unit as one interviewee recounted:

In terms of who owned the issue of black women's issues, well it had to be both of us didn't it, so that would have made it sensible to look at collaboration but no, I don't think it happened that much. (Barbara, Women' Unit Worker, Late Adopter Council)

This appears to mirror the difficulties faced in relation to joint working mentioned at the pioneering council. As discussed earlier, this arguably reflects the broader tensions within theory and activism around the intersection of gender and race, which were prominent at the time the initiatives were established.

So, overall we can see that the attentiveness to women as a diverse group, and attempts to consider how sex or gender intersect with other equalities strands, were most in evidence during the municipal feminist era at the early adopter council, and least at the late adopter. I now move to consider how this has or has not developed over time in the decades since the municipal feminist initiatives were first created.

### *Complicating the Subject in the Contemporary Era*

Today the late adopter council still appears to have the most limited understanding of women's diversity and the significance of thinking intersectionally about equalities. The



interviews I undertook with council workers in 2011 revealed some recognition that women as a group may have different experiences, but this was not couched in terms of the other protected characteristics such as race or disability. They did not show attempts to undertake intersectional analysis of how the different equality strands interact. The contemporary documents did mention diversity in the context of the generic equalities agenda, as the equality policy states, ‘as an employer we value diversity (people’s differences) and want a workforce that reflects the community that we serve’. On the one hand, this suggests equality of outcome is aimed for in terms of the council’s workforce. Yet by including everyone and avoiding reference to specific groups (such as women) who might be under-represented, it loses context that would aid in its interpretation. It also does not make the relevance of intersectionality explicit in how you would act on this. In comparison to the municipal feminist working, although diversity is now explicitly mentioned within the council’s official texts, it does not really appear to have added meaningfully to the work being undertaken in relation to gender equality. This echoes the points made in previous paragraphs, where I argued for the independence of terminological advancements and conceptual understanding in terms of gender and equality.

Perhaps more surprisingly, today in the early adopter council neither women’s diversity nor attempts at intersectional analysis are particularly evident. Although the corporate documents on equalities include references to all of the different equality strands, there is not attention to how they interact. The interviews add different elements to this. One interviewee displayed a clear understanding of the need to consider how sex interacts with other equalities strands, but while discussing the on-going failure of the council to manage this recounted:

actually saying, well, what about the needs of black women who happen to be disabled and gay, you know it just doesn’t come into it. And I think we’ve still got some way to go on looking at multiple discrimination. Um I know the law’s there to protect those, but it’s putting it in practice. (Geraldine, Women’s Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)

This vision of the council not being particularly effective at nuancing its understanding and working on equalities is arguably also illustrated by the one interviewee who mentioned diversity explicitly. They said:

you know that kind of general positive outlook in terms of, diversity and different people and you know everybody can contribute and everybody's got talent, and uh, not making assumptions about people and things like that. Being open minded I suppose and uh positive about those sort of things. (Antony, Human Resources Manager, Pioneering Council)

As discussed above in relation to the late adopter authority, the mention of diversity here as an agenda is about individuals rather than groups (such as women or ethnic minorities). In this sense it does not facilitate thinking about how the different equalities strands might need to be unpicked (as in women's diversity) or interact (i.e. require intersectional analysis). It is thus arguable that although the different equalities strands are still mentioned within the same documents, there is actually less consideration of women's diversity as a group or indeed of how the different strands interact with each other, than during the municipal feminist era. This also links to the discussion in the following chapter, around the implications of recent legislation that both distinguishes and brings together different equalities strands.

The contemporary documents of the enthusiastic follower council reflect the most cogent account of diversity as a strategy for working on equalities. This is illustrated by this extract from the council's single equality scheme for 2010 to 2013:

Diversity is about recognising and valuing differences in their broadest sense. This means understanding how people's differences and similarities can be mobilised for the benefit of the individual, the organisation and society as a whole.

This text also motions towards the idea of the individual as situated within a broader organisational and societal context. This is significant in terms of the problem I raised earlier about the increasing prevalence of an individualised framework for equalities. Having said this, it does focus on the benefit an individual can bring to the organisation and society, as opposed to recognising how the organisation and society might impact upon and shape the options and choices of the individual.

Although the documents of the enthusiastic follower council today reference diversity, they do not reflect it in the sense of complicating the subject woman. Nor do they provide concrete examples of considering how the different equality strands interact, i.e. intersectional thinking. Despite the documents including all the different equality

strands, the manner in which this is done (particularly in response to the 2010 Equality Act which I discuss in the following chapter) in some sense hinders intersectional thinking. This can be seen in the way that, where during the municipal feminist era LGBTI and pregnancy and maternity issues would be considered to be connected to sex and the working of the women's initiative, these are now sectioned off separately. Of course it might be argued that in relation to the other equalities strands, it aids intersectional thinking that they are now joined in the same legislation. Nonetheless, from the perspective of gender, this illustrates a particular example of the way in which shifts in the conceptual framing of the gender equality working can result in a less intersectional and more individualised framework from which to address inequality.

The interviews with current workers at the enthusiastic follower council also present a mixed picture in relation to women's diversity and intersectional working. On the one hand there was evidence of strong knowledge and understanding of how different inequalities interact with each other and can be in conflict, and the need to consider this in the council's working. This is illustrated by one of my interviewees saying:

So we often look at pockets of women which means we overlay women in deprived areas or we overlay women from certain black and minority ethnic communities or we look at certain work areas such as management. Or again if we look at segregated employment um, vertical segregation, then although women are under-represented as say engineers, if we look at what has maximum impact on the service user, the areas really of most concern are the fact that we have hardly any men in under 5s because that's a service delivery towards a 50% male you know kiddies in school, or in nurseries. And then similarly we look at health and social care and something like, less than 10% men offering intimate care as a home carer. And yet we probably have about 30% or 40% men who may need intimate care and they prefer to have that from a man rather than a woman. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

What is positive about the data collected from the enthusiastic follower council, is the cogent use of terminology around diversity in the texts, coupled with a sense of reflection on the part of interviewees about the difficulties facing their attempts to work across the different equality strands and maintain work on inequality between the sexes. In comparison, the late adopter council does not appear to have moved forward much

from the municipal feminist era, and the early adopter could in some senses be seen to have regressed in its attentiveness to women's diversity and intersectionality between the different equality strands. As with the subject of the initiatives and their conception of equality, the actual significance of the increased deployment of the terminology of 'diversity' within the councils is highly dependent on the understanding of individual workers.

### *Gender Mainstreaming*

The concept of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for promoting equality has been common since the mid-1980s. This was endorsed at the UN fourth world conference on women in Beijing 1995, and by the EU and UK government (Rees, 1999, 2002). Mainstreaming represents the idea that gender equality should be a consideration at all stages of policy making, implementation and evaluation (Rees, 1999). Rees describes its elements as: recognising androcentricity, the gender disaggregation of statistics, visioning, participation and democracy, awareness raising and training, monitoring and evaluation, and processes and procedures. Although across all three sites none of the municipal feminist documents or interviews mention gender mainstreaming explicitly, their working arguably maps closely onto these dimensions described by Rees. I began exploring this in the previous chapter where I revealed the way in which the initiatives sought to organise and integrate their work on equality throughout the councils. One interviewee from the municipal feminist initiative at the late adopter council recounted this:

well we did get things, I don't know how much effect they had, but we did get things put into other department's policies, that just as they had to look at how any particular policy decision they were taking affected people with disabilities or ethnic minority, they also had to have a look at the effect it would have on women as well. So that any policy that anybody was bringing forward had to have, I can't remember what they called it then, but a sort of evaluation of how it would impact on women. (Margaret, Women's Advisory Group Chair, Late Adopter Council)

Similarly, in the enthusiastic follower and pioneering councils, attempts were made to work alongside other departments to ensure women were considered in relation to their

work (as discussed in the previous chapter). The pioneering use of data collection and analysis in relation to women — something which was particularly strong in the pioneering council's women's initiative — was also a crucial element of the municipal feminist working. I would also suggest that the idea of 'visioning' as imagining and creating new ways of organising the world in relation to gender was essential to the municipal feminist initiatives, particularly as their very existence challenged the surrounding councils' structures. I return to this idea later in chapter eight as an important characteristic of the workers as 'professional feminists', and something which distinguishes them from the 'femocrat'. It is evident that when we consider the practical and conceptual approach of the municipal feminist initiatives, there are numerous ways their approaches reflect the concept of gender mainstreaming, despite the fact that it was not named as such. Although the concept of mainstreaming was being developed in the same time period as the initiatives, they do not appear to have drawn on this theorising in developing their work. I suggest this provides another example of the way in which the development and use of theories and the related terminology, do not necessarily occur in a straightforward linear fashion. Instead it seems that the practice of mainstreaming was being carried out (in some sense) in the arena of local government, while simultaneously the theory of mainstreaming was being developed in the space of international theorising and politics.

### *Mainstreaming in the Contemporary Era*

Moving forward to consider the work taking place today, mainstreaming is now consciously named in both the texts and interview data. In the pioneering council one of my interviewees spelled out what mainstreaming meant for their work on gender equality, saying it was about:

setting up processes for monitoring opportunity of outcomes, not just about opportunity but who's actually benefiting from resources and is there a gender imbalance or not. So it's about measuring that and having a performance framework around equalities...to get beyond having to have individuals to ensure that happened, to make sure it was mainstreamed into the way in which day to day business is undertaken so that when directorates are service planning they have in their mind's eye issues of gender, and you know, that part of service performance

arrangements would include a gender analysis. But it would just be parcel of what you do, and you don't need specialists around to do it. (Eleanor, Head of Policy Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

This lays out several of the elements of mainstreaming, including data collection, monitoring, planning and integration. The idea that responsibility for equalities is dispersed throughout the council's working was also suggested by another interviewee:

yeah I think it's because it's at a level where its reasonably, yeah it's kind of, it's so much part of the everyday, all those kind of things. (Antony, Human Resources Manager, Pioneering Council)

Having said this, there were also points where we might wish to question the account of successful mainstreaming in the pioneering council. Another of the interviewees explicitly suggested that gender mainstreaming had not really happened, saying:

but if you'd, I suppose there has been significant progress made, however I still feel that there's still, it's not integrated, it's not, I don't think its effectively mainstreamed. Yeah that's probably the problem actually, it's not effectively mainstreamed. (Geraldine, Women's Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)

In addition to this, although of the three sites the pioneering council appears to have taken the idea of dispersed and decentralised working the farthest, there are evidently down-sides to this as one interviewee explained:

yeah, I think as I say, I think the downside is not having your professional nagger to make sure that all managers are doing what they need to do, and you know that all managers are monitoring their services and collecting information and analysing it. Having somebody who's on top of that is quite useful, um but we do still have a bit of an overview anyway, but I'm not on people's backs all the time that I might have done previously. So I think that does mean it drops a bit in terms of importance, you know managers have got so much to do and if you haven't got somebody asking for something it can drop in importance. But I nevertheless think it's ingrained in such a degree that you know although we might slip back its still nevertheless there. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

This illustrates the benefit of retaining a unit specifically focused on equalities to drive work forward. The idea of a ‘professional nagger’ picks up on several topics which I explore further in chapter eight: the idea of the workers as challenging the council from within, and their connection with feminism as a movement. Wryly stated here, the ‘nagger’ plays on the stereotype of feminists as complaining and angry — but also making change.

The pioneering council today appears to understand the concept of mainstreaming fairly well, and has taken it furthest towards its logical conclusion of decentralisation. However, it also seems that the combination of financial pressure and the loss of its centralised equalities, and gender equality unit, means that it is questionable whether it actually illustrates gender mainstreaming effectively. Despite the fact that culturally the organisation subscribes to values of equality, I would argue it currently lacks capacity for visioning, partly due to limited resources. Without this it is easy to see why gender mainstreaming has at times been critiqued as a weak tool for bringing about change, and merely a bureaucratic process or tick-box exercise.

In the late adopter council the contemporary documents also reflect a commitment to mainstreaming as its equality policy states:

we know that we need to improve our approach to mainstreaming (making sure that all aspects of our business processes (how we plan manage and monitor our work) take account of and reflect the different needs of the population).

However, this is not a hugely detailed or full account of what mainstreaming is, and does not seem to include envisaging new ways of organising or working. In addition to this, the interview data did not particularly support the idea of its being enacted, although at least one of my interviewees described the council’s work on equalities as being mainstreamed:

So equality work I suppose I kind of spread around, and we would have expected and encouraged each service and each organisation to have an equality action plan that they had responsibility for developing and em implementing and reporting on. Em and that would have a range of different actions in it, you know things to do with service delivery, things to do with employment, things to do with monitoring and policy development, em and we would use that to develop the council’s equality

scheme. So the emphasis is on the activity that takes place in the service because we can't do that for them, we're within corporate services so our role is to encourage and sometimes to require people to do things. (Margot, Head of Corporate Equalities, Research and Consultation, Late Adopter Council)

Margot went on to explain that taking action begins with reporting to the corporate management team of the council, gaining their agreement, and carrying this out within the different departments of the council. In conjunction with this there were various examples given of resistance to acting on issues in relation to gender equality. This gave the sense that although ostensibly considering equalities throughout the council, and writing about it in terms of mainstreaming, it was not taking place in a very effective way.

In the enthusiastic follower council the notion that equalities should be mainstreamed through the council's working is encapsulated in this statement from its single equality scheme for 2010 to 2013:

The council is undergoing a transformational change programme. The Single Equality Scheme recognises this is an opportunity to promote equal opportunities, eliminate discrimination and improve relations between differing communities. The Business Transformation directorate has embedded equalities impact assessments and consultation with equalities communities into the business processes to ensure all programmes of work consider the equalities implications of any change plans.

However, in contrast to the pioneering council, the enthusiastic follower retains a central equalities unit to support the enactment of this. Unlike the late adopter council, there also appears to be a greater degree of understanding and collaboration between the equality unit and other areas of the council. For example, one of my interviewees recounted that it is:

very clear that we should, we must not deliver equalities in isolation and we mustn't pick up the pieces of what other people are doing...our role should be about influencing other people to do it. Not doing it ourselves. (Dot, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This quotation reflects very clearly the understanding of the equality worker, but also as discussed earlier the most senior council staff, that for mainstreaming to work it



requires the active participation of different areas of the council, rather than being imposed or only carried out by the equalities staff.

Comparing the working of both eras (municipal feminist and contemporary) to theoretical definitions of mainstreaming, both display some of its characteristics in their working. This is particularly worthy of note in the context of the municipal feminist era, given that the naming and international recognition of gender mainstreaming was taking place concurrently with the creation of the initiatives. Having said this, along with the change to explicitly naming work on equalities as mainstreaming, the contemporary and municipal feminist eras arguably emphasise different elements of the mainstreaming strategy. This is one way in which the work undertaken on gender equality since the 1980s has changed that is not straightforwardly positive or negative. In the contemporary working, the emphasis is firmly on monitoring and evaluation, while in the municipal feminist period there is a greater element of creative visioning in relation to the gender equality work. I return to discuss visioning in chapter eight when I consider the positioning of the equality workers in relation to the feminist movement. The difference in visioning between the two eras is significant because, as discussed in earlier chapters, one of the criticisms which has been leveled at the enactment (rather than the principle) of gender mainstreaming is its lack of creative visioning. The idea that part of its role is to facilitate the imagining and creation of new forms and ways of organising work in order to erase patterns of inequality is important. However, it does not appear that there is currently significant time or resources available to undertake this within the councils I studied.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has examined the ways in which both the municipal feminist initiatives and present day equivalents named and understood key elements of their working, through their workers and texts. I began by considering the subject of the initiatives, past and present — and documenting the move from thinking about ‘woman’ to ‘gender’. In doing so I highlighted the way this does not necessarily reflect the presence of a more nuanced or structural understanding of the subject. At points work on gender would appear more accurately described as attending to sex. I argued that the significance of this terminological change is mediated by both the knowledge of the individual

workers, and the broader context of a more individualised approach to equalities. This was borne out through a comparison of the three council sites with each other, as well as over time. In terms of how equality itself is understood within the sites, comparing the past and present working revealed similar elements were present in both time periods. These included the removal of discrimination, equal opportunity, equal treatment, having specific needs and concerns attended to, and supportive measures to achieve equality. However, I noticed a shift in emphasis, with a notable move towards focusing on equality of outcome, particularly as a way of measuring work being undertaken on gender equality. This was coupled with acknowledgement of the idea that equal treatment does not mean identical treatment. There was also considerable variation shown between the three sites, signalling the scope for equality to be stretched, or shrunk depending on the interpretation and enactment of the texts by workers. Moving to consider the notion of diversity, I showed that varying levels of attention were given to the topic, which have also shifted in different directions over time. Some of the municipal feminist and contemporary initiatives showed concern with the idea of women as a diverse group, as well as the way in which different inequalities intersect with each other. However, there was not a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that intersectional analysis was taking place and being applied. In addition to this, there were points indicating that this is an area where there has been, and remains difficulties. As with the concepts of gender and equality, the understanding of individual workers is influential in terms of the extent to which these ideas are realised. I also considered the concept of gender mainstreaming in relation to the past and present working of the councils. Although mainstreaming was only explicitly named in the contemporary documents and interviews, as I have shown in this and the previous chapter, in several ways the municipal era initiatives prefigured elements of this as a form of organising gender equality working. I explored the way in which the main elements of mainstreaming (recognising androcentricity, the gender disaggregation of statistics, visioning, participation and democracy, awareness raising and training, monitoring and evaluation, and processes and procedures) were present in both time periods to some extent. However, over time the emphasis has changed with the contemporary working now more focused on monitoring and evidence gathering than visioning. This has implications for the work which can take place, but also for the way in which the workers can be situated in relation to the feminist movement as I discuss in chapter eight.

This chapter has utilised some of the broad concepts underlying work on gender equality as a way of assessing change and continuity in councils' work on this topic over the past 30 years. Contributing to my broader interest in examining the relationship between feminist ideas and their practice, this has highlighted the ways in which shifts in terminology, conceptual understanding and practice do not necessarily occur simultaneously, nor connect in the ways we might expect. Although I have marked points both productive and problematic, fundamentally my data has revealed the contingency of how terminology and concepts are applied, largely dependent on the knowledge of the individuals who work in this area. This contingency resides in the space of interpretation occupied by the gender equality workers; between legislation and policy, policy and practice. This mirrors the discussion in earlier chapters about ways of organising work, and the discussion in the following chapters about the significance of legislation, and the location of feminist work. The analysis of these can fruitfully take place by considering specific occurrences without rigidly adhering to existing schematisations.

The terminology and conceptual understandings discussed in this chapter also relate to the broader legislative framework around equality. In the following chapter I address this specifically, moving to examine the role legislation has played in driving and shaping gender equality working in my three sites — during the municipal feminist and contemporary periods.

## 7. Carrot or Stick? Legislating for Equality

### *Introduction*

Post-feminist narratives suggest the very existence of gender equality legislation means this inequality has been adequately attended to. Indeed, in the aftermath of my fieldwork in 2011, the status of the newly passed 2010 Equality Act and the extent to which it would be brought into force has been uncertain, due to the political agenda of the government. In this context, this chapter considers the role of legislation in the development of gender equality work in local government. I engage with both defence and critique of recent pieces of equalities legislation. Having considered the practical and conceptual dimensions of the work on gender equality being undertaken in my three research sites, this chapter examines the role of legislation in relation to this, as a specific instantiation of theory intended to be translated into practical action. I ask what its significance has been in driving and shaping gender equality working in local government. Because I am primarily interested in considering how concepts related to gender equality have been operationalised over time, I focus specifically on equalities legislation addressing gender in some way, as opposed to legislation more widely, for example addressing local government. When initially considering my data, the increasing mention of legislation over time was striking. Coupled with the modest academic attention that has been given to the implementation of the most recent Equality Acts of 2006 and 2010, in the context of local government, this highlighted the need to investigate in greater detail. As discussed in the literature review in chapters two and three, there has been some work which has connected the development of women's initiatives in local government to broader changes and legislation on gender equality. This discussion was already taking place during the period in which the initiatives were being established — for example Coyle (1989) and Lovenduski (1989) discussed the role that local government played as an innovator in the field of equality. Lovenduski and Randall (1993) also suggested the achievements of municipal feminist women's initiatives included legitimising the discussion of the gender dimensions of council policy and practice. Some of the work which has examined the implementation of recent equalities legislation in local government includes Conley and Page (2010), Monro (2006), and Richardson and Monro (Richardson and Monro, 2013). These

authors raise important questions about its utility and operationalisation also discussed by Halford and Leonard (Halford and Leonard, 2001), as for example, what an organisation *says* it does can be different from what it actually carries out. In this chapter I explore the issues around legislation's utility and operationalisation in more detail. In doing so I continue to consider Lombardo et al.'s (2009) notion of the ways in which gender equality undergoes processes of shrinking, fixing, stretching and bending in relation to the creation and implementation of legislation and policy.

I begin by exploring the significance of legislation to the municipal feminist initiatives of my three council sites, and revealing how this is correlated with the timing of their establishment. Following this I discuss the significance of legislation to the contemporary work taking place on gender equality, and examine accounts of its implementation by equality workers. The 2010 Equality Act, and the earlier introduction of the Gender Equality Duty are shown to be significant in shaping and standardising the type of work carried out within local government. However, the knowledge and understanding of the equality workers means there is considerable scope for variation in its application across the three council sites. Although there are ways in which the legislation appears to have shaped working positively, my analysis also highlights two issues it raises. Specifically, around the way the different strands of equalities work are brought together and prioritised, and more generally, the way lack of knowledge can curtail the legislation's application. This is related to the discussion in the previous chapter about how the initiatives understand the subject of their working and address diversity and intersectionality, and to earlier literature which has flagged the loss of specialist knowledge on gender within local government as problematic.

### *Legislation and the Municipal Feminist Initiatives*

The relationship between equalities legislation (or its absence) and the municipal feminist women's initiatives is noteworthy. As Edwards (1989), and Coote and Pattullo (1990) pointed out at the time, legislation directly supporting their work would have helped to legitimise their at times controversial endeavours. Edwards also discussed the fact the pre-existence of legislation relating to equality and employment made work on this particular area easier. However, although the literature on municipal feminism touches upon it, there is little which has been written specifically considering the role of

legislation in driving and shaping the work of municipal feminist initiatives. Examining the municipal feminist era texts from my three sites revealed that the pioneering council's initiative was most obviously conscious of legislation in its working, and the late adopter's the least. As discussed in previous chapters, the pioneering initiative was formed in a London borough council shortly following the creation of the GLC's well publicised women's committee. In contrast, the late adopter initiative was formed much later — at the beginning of the 1990s — and without the status and resources of a committee. There is only one mention of legislation in the documents collected from the late adopter council, where its 1991 policy statement on women and equality says:

legislation alone has not and will not, result in equality for women and that many changes in societal responsibilities and attitudes are required before women will have real equality of opportunity.

This suggests a perspective not entirely convinced of the utility of legislation in driving forward equality, seeing external, 'societal responsibilities and attitudes' as needing to change first, rather than after legislation, or indeed local government. This makes it unsurprising then that legislation is not referenced in relation to the planning or execution of the women's initiative's work. We might have expected the late adopter council, given its timing, would have taken the opportunity to follow and learn from the earlier initiatives, including their use of legislation to legitimise their working.

However, this does not seem to be the case, and instead the reluctance of the council to create a women's initiative is also borne out in the slightly resigned attitude reflected in its documents. As Susan Halford discussed in 1990 in her significant work on women's initiatives, this could be a reflection of the old-guard nature of the Labour Party in the late adopter authority. In contrast to the pioneering and enthusiastic follower, the interviews at the late adopter council do not add significantly to our understanding of how legislation related to its gender equality work. One interviewee recounted the discussion of legislation at NALGWC (the National Association of Local Government Women's Committees) meetings, but again, this does not necessarily reflect its importance in the local context of the late adopter initiative.

As outlined in chapter five, the enthusiastic follower initiative was formed several years after the first initiatives in London and the Greater London Council (GLC), and was endowed with a fairly high level of status and resources. There were more frequent

references to legislation in the documents of the enthusiastic follower initiative. For example, the 1986 job descriptions for the women's unit workers require that the appointee:

maintain an up to date knowledge of relevant legislation, research and developments liaising as appropriate with other local authorities central government organisations, local/national/voluntary bodies, companies, education and training establishments and individuals.

This suggests that from the inception of the unit it was envisaged that legislation would be integral to shaping its work, through the conduit of its staff. The interviews also showed a slightly increased discussion of legislation compared to the late adopter initiative. However, this was partly about the way in which the Labour Party at national level developed equalities legislation, rather than the way in which this shaped practice within the local council. This chimes with the concern with democratisation that was ongoing within the national Labour Party at this point. It is possible to see how those concerned with gender equality could — in this particular case — strategically connect this interest with those of the broader party. This is also relevant when thinking about the broader genesis of women's initiatives. I would argue that this illustrates the way in which different elements within the Labour Party inflected the working of the initiatives — while also reinforcing the point that municipal feminism and municipal socialism were not synonymous.

The pioneering council showed the greatest concern with equalities legislation for its working. As in the enthusiastic follower council, the 1982 job description for the initiative's women's officer includes the requirement, 'to advise on the implications of existing and future legislation in the area of women's equality'. In addition to this there are various points that suggest that the women's initiative was enacting work in response to legislation. This is particularly evident in relation to employment issues both internal and external to the council. For example the 1989 progress report of the women's committee recounts:

following the 1984 equal value amendment to the equal pay act, [the council] initiated research into how the amendment would affect local authorities as employers. This lead to a broader study — co-ordinated by [the council] — which has now provided local authority employers with the information they need to

incorporate the principles of equal pay for work of equal value into their own pay structures.

This shows the pioneering women's initiative responding to legislation through undertaking research, proactively using this to inform practice, and then sharing this work with other employers. This extract also supports the point made by Edwards (1989) that work on employment was easier for women's initiatives to undertake as this was an area legislated for in terms of equalities (at least to some extent). We might extrapolate from this to suggest that as legislation has developed over time, it would enable more working to be undertaken on equalities in local government. The interviews supported this view that legislation was at the forefront of the women's initiative's development, as all interviewees seemed to feel that it was significant for their working. When speaking about the development of the initiative one interviewee said:

I think it was a direct response to a lot of what the GLC was doing at the time and the legislative framework around equalities, particularly the Sex Discrimination Act...the council was very progressive in terms of wanting to move the equalities agenda into both employment and service delivery. (Geraldine, Women's Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)

This clearly enunciates the idea that the very existence of the women's unit in the pioneering council was partly in response to national equalities legislation. The interview data from the pioneering council also arguably reflects its staff using legislation as a lever for change, both within and outside the council. This was discussed in relation to housing, childcare and employment. One interviewee described being influenced by work carried out by the GLC to use contract compliance to embed the consideration of equalities into the working of the council. Another recounted:

a woman wanted to be rehoused and it was members that really, the women members that picked up, although this was a child protection issue, it was a gender issue as well because it was women that tended to be the main carers. And so we used the children's act to try and highlight the need to improve rehousing policies. (Geraldine, Women's Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)



This is striking as it suggests a savvy and active relationship with the national legislation that not only wasn't clearly present in the other two sites, but arguably has more in common with the contemporary working of the councils as I will now go on to show. This also highlights the importance of the individuals in utilising the legislation — without which its significance is limited. Comparing the three sites, the texts and interviews suggest that national equalities legislation was most important in driving and shaping the working of the pioneering council's initiative, followed by the enthusiastic follower, and lastly the late adopter. There are various factors which we might speculate would influence this. For example, if we consider the broader political environment and the time at which the initiatives were formed, the pioneering initiative was created during a period of antagonism between national and local government — perhaps meaning legislation was more important in bolstering its work. Whereas, following the abolition of the GLC, the late adopter council's development of an initiative might have been less controversial. It could also have been that the physical distance of the councils from the seat of national government influenced their attentiveness to legislation, as the pioneer was in London, and the late adopter geographically the furthest away. I now move to consider the contemporary gender equality working and its relationship to legislation. This enables me to examine how this has changed over time, and how the recent 2010 Equality Act and earlier Gender Equality Duty have been received and interpreted in the context of local government.

### *Legislation and the Contemporary Gender Equality Working*

As well as legislative developments, there have also been broad changes in the organisation and management of public sector working through new public management since the women's initiatives were created. Not uncontroversially, this involves a greater focus on efficiency and outcomes, applying ideas previously associated with the private sector. The rise of performance management and indeed the shift to frame equalities in administrative rather than political terms (Monro, 2006) have been important in shaping local government working on gender equality since the women's initiatives were created. This forms the backdrop against which specific pieces of equalities legislation have been implemented — the Gender Equality Duty, and more recently the Public Sector Equality Duty of the 2010 Equality Act.

The Gender Equality Duty came into force in 2007 and required all public bodies (including councils) to undertake general and specific duties. The general duties required public bodies to have due regard in carrying out their functions to: eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex, and promote equality of opportunity between women and men. In relation to the discussion of terminology in previous chapters, it is worth noting that this definition does not necessarily entail a structural understanding of gender, beyond men and women. Here the Gender Equality Duty can be seen to mirror this. Although slightly different in England, Scotland and Wales, the specific duties required public bodies to: prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how it will meet its general and specific duties and setting out its gender equality objectives; consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap; gather and use information on how the public authority's policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services; consult stakeholders and take into account relevant information to determine its gender equality objectives; and assess the impact of current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality. It also required them to implement the actions set out in the scheme within three years, report on the scheme every year, and review the scheme at least every three years. There was also a Race Equality, and Disability Equality Duty alongside this.

The Equality Act came into force in 2010 and brought together a range of different pieces of legislation relating to different areas of equality. As part of this it introduced a single Public Sector Equality Duty covering nine different protected characteristics that came into force in 2011. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership.<sup>9</sup> Thus 'gender equality' no longer exists as a category, although elements which we might regard as parts of this remain: sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership. As I discussed in the previous chapter, we *could* see this as a potential shrinking of gender, depending on the extent to which links are retained between these elements and they are regarded as structural. We can also consider whether or not this formulation is more or less able to facilitate intersectional working across all of the equalities strands.

---

<sup>9</sup> Only the first element of the general duties applies to marriage and civil partnership: the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The general duties for public bodies stemming from this are now to have due regard in their functions for the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The specific duties for public bodies are now to: publish information annually to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty, and prepare and publish one or more objectives that it thinks it needs to achieve to further any of the aims of the general equality duty which must be specific and measurable.

The contemporary documents from all three sites support the idea that national legislation on equality has been significant in shaping their working on gender equality. The influence of the 2006 Equality Act, which introduced the Gender Equality Duty, is particularly clear. For example, the pioneering council's gender equality scheme for 2011 to 2014 states:

we will put the gender equality duty into practice to ensure that men and women living or working in [the council] are treated fairly and have equal opportunities.

Similarly, the 2011 annual report on equalities and community cohesion from the enthusiastic follower council explains what the duty requires, and outlines its strategic aims as being:

To improve the diversity of the workforce at all grades. To narrow the gap of disadvantage for equalities communities. To make sure the council's services and contractors deliver accessible and appropriate services to equalities communities. To ensure [the council's] transformational programmes promote equal opportunities and reduce discrimination.

The documents from all three sites discuss to varying degrees their work to fulfill the Gender Equality Duty — including carrying out equality impact assessments, gathering data, planning, monitoring and reviewing policies and services in relation to equalities. For example, the 2011 to 2014 gender equality scheme of the pioneering council opens:

This is our second Gender Equality Scheme. It sets out how we will put the Gender Equality Duty into practice to ensure that men and women living or working in [the council] are treated fairly and have equal opportunities.

In relation to the more recent 2010 Equality Act, all three sites at least mention its development in their equality documents. However, the sites' documents reflect different levels of integration of their work across the equality strands (these are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation). The enthusiastic follower has the most integrated documents, while the pioneering council still has separate equality schemes as well as some combined reporting on the equality strands. The late adopter has integrated race, gender and disability schemes (which is in line with the pre-2010 Equality Act duties), as well as maintaining separate equality schemes. Broadly then we can see how the policy and guidance documents of the councils reflect their attentiveness to national legislation. However, as I now go on to examine, it is through considering how practitioners reflect on and use the legislation that we gain a clearer picture of its significance, and the differences between the three sites. This allows us to see the ways in which the legislation is stretched and bent, as well as the role the knowledge of the equality workers plays in this.

As discussed in earlier chapters, some of the research which has been undertaken looking at the Gender Equality Duty has suggested that it is not seen as the main driver of equality work by those enacting it in local government (Conley and Page, 2010). Conley and Page suggest it has been used to legitimise initiatives and also as a lever to include equalities into performance management criteria. My data broadly reflects these findings, but presents a strengthened sense of the Gender Equality Duty as important in shaping work. It also adds early insight into the workers' perceptions of the 2010 Equality Act, as this had only recently been introduced at the time of my fieldwork. Across all three council sites the current equality workers I interviewed suggested that recent legislation had been significant in shaping their work on gender equality. For example, it was suggested that posts had been developed in response to legislation, as one interviewee explained:

so it was quite a lot of work. and as legislation developed, then more posts were created so for example we've got a part-time development officer to work with the women's forum so that bit of the work went out. And then human resources gave their advisors a little bit of the...work life balance became part of their role. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

It was also suggested that legislation played a role in prioritising work on the different equality strands, as one interviewee discussed:

that's where we are at the moment, so that's why we don't have equality units...so we went from specific equality units to all equality brought together so, there was when I took over a definite hierarchy of importance. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

When asked why this was, Eleanor suggested that the incremental introduction of legislation provoked this hierarchy; with race equality being prioritised over gender equality, being prioritised over the other strands. The perception that, 'a lot of the battles have been won' in terms of gender equality alongside, 'high profile racial incidents' in the area, for Eleanor, established the grounds for a diminished prioritisation of combating gender inequality in relation to other areas. As mentioned in previous chapters, it is also relevant that in relation to the prioritisation of work on race and ethnicity, the early adopter has the most ethnically diverse population of the three sites. Legislation was also reported as impacting significantly on the way human resources (HR) work was carried out, as one interviewee explained:

to a certain extent the workload demands what's happening, so if we're due to review our equalities scheme that'll dictate obviously what the priority is. We're doing a lot just now in terms of equal pay, em that's been determined by other external time scales. We also would look at what legislative changes are coming up, what policies we need to change. That prioritises the work. It isn't a case of well 50% of our time is on equalities and 50% is on employee relations. It really is a case of what's coming up and what do we need to deal with. So it's planned to a point but reactive in other things. (Dawn, Senior Human Resources Officer, Late Adopter Council)

This ties back to the point made in previous chapters about the way in which the work undertaken by the initiatives has changed over time, with some areas such as HR being managed by different departments. I would argue that as well as the way the earlier advent of legislation on employment made it easier for the municipal feminist initiatives to work on those issues, subsequent legislation has also shaped what is prioritised.

The interviewees also discussed the necessity of knowledge of legislation in order to carry out work on gender equality. For example one interviewee in the enthusiastic follower council emphatically recounted:

Gone are those days where you could just be an activist transplanted into the council. You've got to be blinkin' good on legislation, you've got to be good on data analysis because you know you've got to be evidence based and scientific. You can't just go round saying, you should do this, to service managers. (Dot, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This supports the argument begun in the previous two chapters, about the significance of knowledge (of the equality workers) in shaping how policy texts are interpreted and enacted. In this case, knowledge of legislation is regarded as crucial to being able to communicate and enact equality work in the context of the contemporary council environment. As I go on to discuss in chapter eight, it is specifically feminist knowledge which appears essential to the professional execution of their work on gender equality in local government.

The interviewees also reflected specifically on the *ways* in which the councils were seeking to fulfill the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty, and Public Sector Equality Duty. Particularly this included: work on equal pay, equality impact assessments, and monitoring and reporting on equality. Discussing the development of work on equal pay, one interviewee said that their equality work pre-dated the legislation. They suggested its real impact was to concentrate energy on certain areas of this pre-existing work. This was not to say that there were no implications for practice. For example, when discussing single status Eleanor said, 'we really had to review everything and look at equal pay for equal value'. But even then this interviewee was insistent that much of this work was already underway prior to the introduction of the legislation. Their view of the introduction of legislation was not straightforward. Whilst acknowledging that it was constructive in consolidating good practice and prompting debate, they also spoke about problems with its implementation:

with each of the acts, I mean the annoying thing with each of the acts is because they came in incrementally they're all slightly different, and all ask for something slightly different — it's very annoying. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

Another interviewee reflected on the time cost of developing equality impact assessments in response to the legislation saying:

we did an equality impact assessment but it wasn't a gender equality impact assessment it was just an equality impact assessment. And we did that and we found that it was actually quite time consuming to do because we did the full thing, we didn't just do the screening part we did the full blown thing. But it was worthwhile in the end but at the start because we actually had to develop an assessment tool, and we had to start from scratch and do the whole thing. (Fran, Senior Planning and Social Work Officer, Late Adopter Council)

On the one hand this illustrates the way in which organisational learning and development stemmed from the requirements of the legislation, in ways that were not always expected by the workers. However, the idea that, 'it was actually quite time consuming' also suggests that for this individual at least they had not initially anticipated equality impact assessments would be particularly significant or complicated.

The issue of monitoring and reporting on gender equality, and how work has subsequently developed was also discussed by Eleanor:

I think prior to that [2006] it was quite hard to show that there was equality of outcomes because it wasn't always monitored. But I think we increasingly in the '90s got much better at monitoring, certainly towards the end of the '90s.

Another interviewee also explained the positive impact of having to report on equalities work and its outcomes. As with other participants Fran explained that some of the recommendations made in legislation were already, 'in place', but that a positive outcome was the requirement to remain focused on achievable outcomes — as opposed to working towards unattainable goals. As action plans developed there was a realisation that, 'you can't always do everything' (Fran, Senior Planning and Social Work Officer, Late Adopter Council). Fran was also keen to point out that planning had to be done properly and in tandem with responsible reporting saying:

we should report this is what we achieved and this is what we didn't and here's why we didn't, and here's why we're going to carry that forward to the next 12 months

and maybe add some new things that we think achievable. (Fran, Senior Planning and Social Work Officer, Late Adopter Council)

In terms of the style of work being undertaken on gender equality, the interviews also add to the texts by making clear the move towards a more strategic and technical approach to work — prompted in part by the legislation. As one interviewee recounted:

what we did as a council was decide we wouldn't just do it for race, we would apply the same requirements in the Race Equality Act for all our other equality areas. So we had that in place which started off our monitoring our service planning arrangements, started integrating that in. (Eleanor, Head of Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

Interestingly Eleanor pointed out that the Equality Standard for Local Government (a framework council's could use to check their equality working) was not hugely different from the Race Equality Duty, but was more prescriptive — increasing bureaucracy and decreasing enthusiasm for it as a result. Another interviewee explained the increasingly technical nature of working on gender equality, where the straightforwardness of the equalities impact assessments can be undermined by the depth of knowledge and understanding that staff need to have to satisfactorily complete them. Jenny went on to suggest that many staff, 'haven't the foggiest idea of what they are supposed to be writing'. According to Jenny this could lead to confusion as to the purpose of the assessments. An associated impact of the assessments is the way in which data analysis can point towards fairly unhelpful conclusions:

I feel that particularly equalities impact assessments and this data analysis has made it harder for us to justify sustaining a gender equality agenda, because women on the face of it don't have as high needs as some of the other equalities communities...I've talked to other equalities officers in other areas to sort of say how do you sustain a women, a gender focus, when the data tells you women are the majority users, women are the majority employees and you know they've said that yes it is difficult but we just sustain projects. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

She went on to suggest that this marginalizes women in relation to other substantive groups, leading to the need to 'overlay' things like deprivation or ethnicity, or to



undertake even more complex data analysis, to provide justification for examining the conditions under which women live. However, as she went on to point out, her experience of working with other authorities showed that very few had the knowledge and resources to undertake this. As well as highlighting the technical knowledge needed for effective working in the contemporary initiatives, this also reflects the way in which issues pertinent to equalities work can be masked or subverted by the way data is analysed. This part of the interview illustrates twin poles of the arguments around managerialism in relation to equalities work. On the one hand the interviewee is engaging with performance management at great depth in order to drive forward gender equality goals. So as Monro (2006) has suggested, we can see equalities framed in administrative, managerial terms rather than political, and how this can be constructive. However, the downside of this appears to be that the connections between different areas of work, and the structural analysis which would enable this, is left only in the understanding of individual workers, if at all. As I go on to discuss in more detail in the following chapter, this knowledge of gender and equality is connected with the identification of the workers with feminism and an important part of their professional capability.

There were various ways in which the legislation was regarded by interviewees as being useful in pushing forward work on gender equality, for example, in making the case for organisational change and getting commitment from other members of staff. One interviewee explained:

and it can be quite useful if you're trying to get commitment corporately here, if you say well it's a legal requirement, it kind of tends to focus people's minds rather than it's a good thing to do, it's actually we could be legally not meeting our requirements, it tends to you know make sure it goes up the agenda in terms of priorities. (Antony, Human Resources Manager, Pioneering Council)

In a similar vein, the idea that legislation meant people could be held to account was celebrated by one interviewee saying:

I mean god, life became so much easier when with the equality legislation. I mean I know there are naysayers I know there are plenty of people who say, oh we should never have bothered, you know, it hasn't made any difference it's just red tape. I utterly disagree, totally disagree with that I think it's made a profound difference

just in terms of the ability to hold people to account. You could never hold people to account before and you can now. (Martha, Women's Forum Co-Chair, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This reflects the findings of Conley and Page (2010) about the utility of the Gender Equality Duty for legitimising the initiatives of equalities workers. It was also discussed how legislative change around gender equality had enabled work to take place with men as well as women. As raised in the previous chapter, this shifting of the subject was regarded as double-edged — on the one hand facilitating a fuller and more nuanced approach to the work, but in other ways enabling work specifically with women to be neglected. Although there were clearly significant ways in which recent equality legislation had affected working on gender equality, it is also important to note the problems expressed by interviewees in relation to this. For example, one interviewee explained the flip side of being able to undertake work with men, the need to defend work specifically focused on women. They recounted:

then the Equality Act came in in 2006 and this was looking at gender and there was quite a large focus on men so it felt at the time that we had to reconsider things like International Women's Day because you had to justify if you were providing any segregated services. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This interviewee went on to talk in great detail about the lengths to which she had needed to go to in terms of reflecting on and analysing work undertaken with women across a range of issues such as health and employment. Although we might regard this as a positive thing — to explain and evidence working, and challenge assumptions — it is also clearly a huge outlay of resources for a small, stretched team. Another interviewee expressed the idea introduced at the beginning of this chapter — that legislation could make some people complacent, providing a sense that equality was sorted out and no longer required action.

Generally though, interviewees reflected positively rather than negatively on the influence of legislation. This was also the case when considering the most recent 2010 Equality Act. Interviewees welcomed the opportunity it was seen to bring to work on new areas of equality, and its unifying effect. One interviewee explained:

I think that was long awaited, we had to have everything brought together to have a bit of a level playing field really for all the equality characteristics, so in that respect [the Equality Act was] very helpful. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

And similarly, another interviewee described the 2010 Equality Act as a gift and stressed the utility of its timing in relation to the new national coalition government taking office. They went on to explain:

there is an art to using the legislation to give more power to your argument, but the fact is the Equality Act has given a new lease, new breath. [FJR: Do you feel that?] I do because [FJR: In what way?] Well because a) it's simpler and easier to understand, it harmonises it all in one place. So there's less dithering about what the [unclear] says and what the Sex Discrimination Act says, and are they all different. (Dot, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

They then went on to discuss the role the act had played in reducing the hierarchy of importance between the different equality strands, and work which was being undertaken in relation to linking two of the strands race and age in order to work on new areas. In the late adopter council too, an interviewee emphasised the welcome simplification of the legislation:

But it's probably, I think the simplification of the legislation's been welcomed because actually, you know you were working with all this different legislation before it was kind of a bit, one thing was saying one thing and something else was a slightly different approach. So I think it was good that it was all brought into one place, it's made it much easier to talk about and not get caught up in the formalities of the process I think, so it's been a positive thing. (Margot, Head of Corporate Equalities, Research and Consultation, Late Adopter Council)

This illustrates the knowledge and skill required of the workers to navigate legislative changes and engage with them in a productive way, with Margot expressing gratitude for the streamlining provided by the most recent Equality Act.

The discussion about how the legislation has worked to shape the topics deemed worthy of equalities workers' attention evidences both benefits and losses; for the conception of gender and the extent to which this is dealt with (with other equalities

strands) intersectionally. It also illustrates an important element in the discursive politics of gender equality. The changing legislation provides a way in which gender can be shrunk, stretched, bent or fixed. As discussed in the previous chapter, the formalisation of different and distinct equalities strands has in some cases meant a separation of different areas of work that we might regard as combined within a full account of gender, such as pregnancy and maternity, sexuality, and sex. There are also areas which have now been brought together in the legislation that would not previously have been considered in tandem, which could be seen to encourage a more intersectional approach.

There are opportunities and costs associated with these new links and distinctions, which can at times mirror earlier debates within the feminist movement around identity politics, as I discussed in chapter two. The codification of protected characteristics, and the way in which this is done, has implications for the work that can take place, how it is prioritised, and how the characteristics are understood to relate to each other.

### *Problems and Comparisons*

As discussed in previous chapters, Conley and Page's 2010 research highlighted several potential problems with the introduction and implementation of the equalities legislation in relation to gender. Firstly, that it was not seen as a priority by public authorities, and secondly that practitioners were worried that the merging of equalities strands could marginalise work on gender. In addition to this, as mentioned in the previous chapter, issues around diversity and intersectionality have been relevant and addressed to varying degrees since the women's initiatives were first formed. The naming, and thus separation, of the different equalities strands has implications for the way in which work is understood and enacted, including the interconnections between them. Although the recognition of a characteristic in legislation and policy is not the same as its being acted upon, there are clearly positives for certain characteristics being formally recognised in this way as they have not been before. However, it is also possible that the overt definition of, and distinction between, protected characteristics can work against attending to them in a structural, connected and intersectional manner. The codification of the strands within the 2010 Equality Act on the one hand reinforces their

individuality as separate strands, while simultaneously bringing them together. This arguably represents conflicting logics within this most recent legislative development, and as mentioned above can be seen to mirror some of the earlier arguments within the WLM around the costs and benefits of identity politics. There remain significant questions about how to recognise, weigh, and address different axes of inequality in a manner that understands how they intersect and interact.

Although it was undoubtedly early in terms of the implementation of the 2010 Equality Act when I undertook my fieldwork, and despite the generally positive comments it garnered from my interviewees, there are several interrelated problems which appear to be raised by it. Firstly, I would argue that there are unresolved issues with regard to the prioritisation of action on the different equalities strands. On the one hand, interviewees talked about it being positive that the different equalities strands now have parallel status. The equalising impact on the equalities strands was discussed to some extent in the section above considering the positive impact of the Equality Act. One interviewee also recounted:

it's given a lot more weight to a more holistic approach to equalities and not a ranking of gender, disability and race are more important than everything else. (Dot, Equalities and Community Cohesion Manager, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

However, this bringing together and equalising of the strands does not automatically make work planning and prioritisation more straightforward. The potential for the bringing together of equalities strands to heighten conflict between them was something suggested by Judith Squires before this was carried out (Squires, 2009), and has also been pointed out by Sandra Fredman (Fredman, 2011). The documents and interview data I collected did not always appear to be addressing this issue explicitly and/or systematically. The enthusiastic follow council was unusual in doing so, and the documents analysed showed that equalities groups with the poorest outcomes were being prioritised. However, this has implications for the action that can take place, for example, on an issue affecting large numbers of people in a way deemed qualitatively less serious.

Problematically there did not seem to be guidance available to the councils, or to council staff (i.e. included as part of the equality plans and other documents) as to how you might go about making decisions between different courses of work. Or indeed,

what you would do if an equality impact assessment revealed that some course of action deemed to be positive for one equality strand, would be detrimental for another. The lack of clear guidance on how this type of issue should be resolved has significant implications for the work that can be planned and carried out on all of the equality strands, including sex. This is also connected to the ability of the legislation to deal with intersectionality and multiple discrimination. Although the Equality Act originally contained specific provisions for addressing multiple discrimination, this part of the Act was not brought into force by the government which inherited it in 2010. As discussed in the previous chapter, the councils I studied did not show a consistent understanding or attentiveness to the way in which the different equality strands do or could interact with one another, and this issue of intersectionality was also evident during the municipal feminist era. At the point at which I carried out my research this did not seem to be being attended to significantly, and it is unclear where guidance on this area, or the impetus to work on it, will come from. This evidently is not something that can be resolved through legislation alone.

This discussion of the legislative framework is connected to the development and retention of knowledge about gender equality in the council staff. Given the complexity of the legislation, and the lack of guidance on issues such as how multiple equalities strands are to be understood, integrated and prioritised, the knowledge and understanding of those implementing it is significant in shaping its impact and outcomes in the context of local government. The knowledge base around gender equality within local government was something I could consider in relation to my interview data. As discussed in earlier chapters, and picked up again in chapter eight, the depth of knowledge and understanding of the individual workers about gender and inequality is an important part of their professional capacity. It enables them to understand, communicate, translate and enact legislation and policy from a national level into a local one, ideally stretching this to bring about the maximum benefit in terms of gender equality outcomes. Although brought to the fore by the introduction of new legislation, this is not something which results from legislation directly. Although there were many points when interviewees displayed an extremely detailed knowledge and understanding of the issues at hand, there were also points, particularly in the late adopter council, where it appeared that the knowledge and understanding of gender reflected in the official documents and interviews, was limited. For example, one of the

workers in the late adopter council, even when prompted, did not seem to see gender equality working as extending to anything beyond violence against women and sex workers. They also suggested that they did not think gender equality would ever be achieved and commented:

I think there'll always be inequality. And I think the fact that we're moving into this recession, coming out of one and moving back into another one, em isn't going to help matters. Because there'll be families out there that don't have a lot of money, they'll be mothers that think there only option is prostitution or whatever lap dancing or whatever else to get money for their families or whatever. I don't think it's something that we'll ever totally get rid of em unfortunately. (Fran, Senior Planning and Social Work Officer, Late Adopter Council)

This suggests a very individualised understanding of gender equality and sex work, which the interviewee then went on to discuss further in relation to domestic violence. I would argue this reflects a limited understanding of gender, gender equality and the way in which inequalities are created or challenged. It is difficult to see how this individual could interpret, develop or advocate for measures designed to improve gender equality, without a deeper understanding of the issues at play. When we consider that the people I interviewed represent those identified within the councils as being the most knowledgeable and responsible for equalities, in some cases this presents a worrying account of the level of expertise contained within the council's workforce. Of course this was not the case with everyone I interviewed and many were extremely knowledgeable. However with shrinking staff numbers and resources, and small teams to begin with, each individual is significant. Knowledge of gender equality and of the relevant legislation arguably has a significant impact on the way in which the national legislation is implemented in the context of local government, through policy and practice. This is connected to an idea which I discuss further in the following chapter. That is that the specifically feminist knowledge identified by many of the equality workers is important to their professional capability in terms of gender equality work. As I will go on to explore, having a deeper, structural understanding of gender equality appears to go hand in hand with feminist identification.

As the discussion above has shown, there are various ways in which both of the most recent pieces of equalities legislation have shaped work taking place in local

government on gender equality. These can be seen across all three of the sites I examined. However, there were also undoubtedly differences in the ways the staff in each council have worked to respond to legislation, which relates to the resources available to them in terms of staff numbers and knowledge. In the late adopter council both documents and interviewees suggested that the council is ahead of legislation in terms of gender equality. For example, one interviewee reflected:

I think we were doing a lot of, I think we were doing more than just working on race gender and disability anyway. So I think we already had work you know looking at issues around homophobia and supported the [council's] LGBT forum, and we used to have an LGBT centre in [the area] — but that closed because the organisation that was running it was not very good. But you know we already were doing things, the kind of above and beyond the existing duties. (Margot, Head of Corporate Equalities, Research and Consultation, Late Adopter Council)

However, this did not seem to be justified by the level of understanding of the issues shown by staff, or the difficulties they reported with making change in the wider council. Looking at the pioneering council and the enthusiastic follower, they have diverged and to some extent reversed positions in their gender equality working. Although both councils have been attentive to legislative developments and their documents reflect an understanding of the issues, the enthusiastic follower has retained more specialist staff and showed a more complex understanding of gender equality, placing it in a better position to successfully enact their legal requirements. Thus, as discussed in previous chapters, it appears that the original form of the women's initiatives does correlate to some extent with the way in which they are able to approach the application of gender equality legislation.

### *Conclusion*

As this thesis is concerned with the way in which theories and concepts of gender equality are enacted in practice, this chapter has considered the role of equalities legislation as a medium for this. Looking at the working of my three sites over time, it is clear that legislative developments have greatly shaped and influenced local government work on gender equality — particularly in terms of standardising what



takes place. Across all three sites studied, the mention of and reference to legislation has greatly increased since the inception of the women's initiatives. Compared to the point at which the initiatives were first created, there is now a clearer baseline in terms of the type of work being carried out, which appears to have been significantly shaped by the Gender Equality Duty and Public Sector Equality Duty. This is particularly evident in the planning and monitoring of work, and the collection and analysis of data. The interview data I collected provided an insight into the way in which the equality workers experienced the necessity to interpret and enact the legislation on a local level, reflecting positively on the way in which it enabled them to advocate for pieces of work. They also largely spoke positively of the 2010 Equality Act, in its role in bringing together and streamlining the legislation they must use, and in equalising the emphasis given to the different equality strands. Following on from the previous chapter I highlighted the significance of the changing codification of the equality strands which has taken place through the legislative developments – for the way in which gender is understood, and the extent to which it is considered intersectionally. The Gender Equality Duty named gender as its subject, focusing on inequality between the sexes. The Public Sector Equality Duty no longer includes 'gender' but does include sex alongside other strands which could previously have been considered within a broad conception of the term, such as gender reassignment. Analysing both the interview and textual data revealed the differences that exist between the three councils, indicating that there is scope for the stretching and bending of the legislation in both positive and negative ways. This also highlighted the significance of the knowledge of equality workers themselves as mediating how they interpret and enact the legislation. A full and structural understanding of gender, and an intersectional understanding of equality across the different strands is neither a necessary nor impossible outcome of either the Gender Equality or Public Sector Equality Duty. However, their different framings of the subject of equality work have implications for how work is understood, prioritised and enacted. I have shown the way in which they affect the workers' approaches to their work within the councils. The knowledge and resources of the workers appeared to account for a significant portion of the differences between the three sites in terms of their relationship to gender equality legislation. In both the pioneering and late adopter councils the reduction in specialist staff and with this the knowledge base seems to limit the work that can take place. This is true despite the quite different backgrounds and evolution of the equalities working in these two councils. In the enthusiastic follower

council where greater numbers of specialist staff remain, and a higher level of knowledge appears to have been maintained, the engagement with legislative developments seems more substantive. The significance of equalities knowledge in interpreting the legislation arguably acts as a potential risk in those councils where this is not present, particularly given the lack of specific guidance provided to councils. In addition to this, I have discussed the particular difficulties this raises around the prioritisation of different pieces of work, for example where the interests of those with different protected characteristics might clash. Relatedly, how the equality workers might deal with issues of multiple discrimination, or indeed begin to think intersectionally about equalities. These are unresolved issues which will not be dealt with in a standardised way without guidance, training or legislative change. Just as there is the potential for a knowledge vacuum to exist in some locations, shrinking the application of gender equality legislation and policy, this does also retain a positive facet. Although far from a total solution, as I discussed in the previous chapter this also provides a potential channel for activists outside of the councils to have influence and add expertise. This is particularly the case given the now routine practice of public consultation in some form which councils undertake.

In the following chapter I examine the workers themselves in relation to the Women's Liberation Movement and feminism, and consider how best we can understand their position.

## 8. Professional Feminists: Challenging Local Government Inside Out

### *Introduction*

This chapter examines local government gender equality workers and seeks to position them in relation to the feminist movement, feminism, and theorising about those working within formal, though not political or activist, channels to further gender equality. In previous chapters I have argued for the significance of individual workers in undertaking the translation and shaping of gender equality ideas into practice. This chapter builds on this by turning to focus on the perspectives of the individual workers, where previous chapters have focused on the organising of, and concepts involved with the councils' working. Significantly, in order to examine the workers in relation to feminism I begin by discussing whether the workers regard themselves as feminist, and more specifically the extent to which their views and working can be seen as connected to the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). Generally speaking, past — and to some extent current gender equality initiatives in local government — have been regarded as an institutionalised element stemming from the WLM. The concept of the femocrat is the closest descriptor developed that might be applied to the workers themselves. My data complicates these broad generalisations in several ways. Firstly, it draws the initiatives closer to the WLM in terms of issues addressed and ways of organising this, blurring the boundary between social movement and state. Secondly, it highlights the way in which the workers go beyond the ascription of femocrat to challenge their institutional location. In the process of teasing out the importance of feminism for their work within the councils, I present them as 'professional feminists' positioned neither fully inside nor outside the state. The distinctive mix of elements of this subject position are laid out as: their feminist knowledge of gender inequality, their paid 'challenge position' in relation to the ideas and organising of the council, and their motivation to bring about practical positive change in people's lives. This combination means that they work to envision new ways of understanding and organising the work of the council in relation to gender equality, without being fully aligned with the institution or with activists outside it. These elements of professional feminism cut across the well established delineations in the analysis of the feminist movement, with important connections and distinctions. The application of feminist knowledge, ways of

organising traditionally associated with the WLM, and a focus on material outcomes are key links to the feminist movement. On the other hand, paid working within an institutional setting is also a distinct path from activism addressed to the state from outside. I present the motivation of my interviewees to work on changing material outcomes as a useful way of understanding their rationale for working in an institutional setting, and an important link to the feminist movement. In doing so this chapter contributes to the presentation of a nuanced picture regarding the evaluation of different strands and modes of feminist working, and a rebalancing between what has at times been presented as ‘proper’ feminism (autonomous groups of the WLM) and those seeking change through and within institutions. Rather than viewing authenticity as residing in a particular locale, the work of the professional feminists can be viewed as one element within a constellation of approaches contributing to the furthering of gender equality.

*Do the Equality Workers Consider Themselves Feminists?*

All of the interviewees from the municipal feminist era reported considering themselves feminists. However, there was one for whom this was not her most important identity, and another who might not have used the term at the time, but would now. As one of my interviewees recounted:

Oh yes definitely, em definitely, I mean you know that was one of the things that definitely drove, and has driven you know my career, you know yes I am absolutely a feminist, I absolutely believe in women’s equality, I absolutely believe that the way our society is organised is, em mitigates against women’s equality, so yes absolutely. (Harriet, Women’s Officer, Late Adopter Council)

And similarly, discussing whether the word feminist would be a term they would apply to themselves two other interviewees commented:

Oh yeah, yeah yeah yeah no absolutely. You’d have to be wouldn’t you, you couldn’t, you couldn’t survive if you weren’t, I can’t see why you wouldn’t be. (Geraldine, Women’s Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)

I'd thought of myself as a feminist ever since I'd thought of myself as anything political. I think I was brought up to think that way. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

These emphatic statements show how important their feminist identity was for interviewees, despite working within the environment of the council. This was definitely something distinct from party and left-wing politics, rather than necessarily connected to it, as another interviewee explained:

Well I regarded myself as a feminist even though it wasn't the thing that people liked to say, but I still say it now even though I think it's worse now than it was then. But no I regarded myself as a feminist and someone that did strive for women's equality, and women achieving their potential. So that's how I would have described myself. By the time I went to work in the women's unit I wasn't into party politics, I'd left the Labour Party. (Barbara, Women' Unit Worker, Late Adopter Council)

This comment begins to introduce the notion of feminist ideas as at times in tension with party and left-wing politics for the individuals involved, as well as at the macro level of the local and national political scene. However, there were others that did connect their feminism to left-wing politics, for example:

I might have called myself a socialist feminist, um yes I think I called, I did call myself a socialist feminist quite early on. So yes. And certainly by the time I was involved in the stuff in [the council] I would have described myself as a socialist feminist. I still do I think [laughs]. (Betty, Equality Consultant, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

I did not provide a definition of feminism to my interviewees, leaving it open for them to pick up as they saw fit and flesh out in discussion. Of course, this could be seen to risk enabling use of a hollow, content free account of feminism if individuals reported that they were feminists unthinkingly, or without reflection on what they deemed the concept to be. However, given the multiple nature of feminism, and the interest of my research in exploring the boundaries of the feminist movement and its working, I did not want to prematurely narrow the possible outcomes by being didactic about defining

it with interviewees. As I return to discuss later, without explicitly asking my interviewees what feminism was, we can discern its parameters from their answers.

Of the nine present day gender equality workers interviewed, six would consider themselves feminists, spread unevenly between the three sites. All three contemporary workers in the enthusiastic follower council, two in the pioneering council, and one in the late adopter council stated they were feminists. For example, Martha stated, 'I'm a radical feminist', and Eleanor, 'I'd definitely call myself a feminist'. So, although still present, the contemporary gender equality workers were less likely to consider themselves feminist than those from the period when the women's initiatives were first established. Having said this, there were also points where they expressed views regarding women's equality, but without a feminist label. For example:

Eh I'm not really what you'd call a feminist but I do think you need to have a wider understanding of discrimination. And how it's evolved and how social things happen, and looking at the power of the press in terms of how that can project some issues. You need to understand all of that a bit better, to have a better understanding of the equalities as a whole. (Dawn, Senior Human Resources Officer, Late Adopter Council)

This interviewee thus acknowledged some feminist ideas, while rejecting the term as something they would personally identify with, as Christina Scharff has documented (Scharff, 2012). In terms of where we should situate the municipal feminist and contemporary workers in relation to the feminist movement, the extent to which they self-identify as feminists is significant. Although feminism as a term is open to interpretation, I would suggest that the very acceptance of its use begins to tie the workers past and present to the movement. What I now go on to examine in greater detail, is the extent to which the workers past and present have connections with the Women's Liberation Movement specifically, in terms of their views and actions both inside and outside the council. This aids in answering the question of how the equality workers relate to feminism as a social movement.

*Relating the Views and Actions of the Equality Workers to the Women's Liberation Movement*

In order to help position the municipal and contemporary workers, I examined how their feminist views and working relate to the WLM. As discussed in detail in earlier chapters, the WLM in the UK had its roots in the new social movements developing in the 1960s (Harriss, 1989), and involved feminist campaigns on a broad range of different issues, organised in a multitude of ways. Certain topics (epitomised by the seven demands of the movement<sup>10</sup>) and certain ways of organising (focused on prefigurative politics and small consciousness raising groups) have come to be seen as epitomising the WLM.

From the perspective of social movement theory, municipal feminist initiatives and indeed contemporary gender equality working, are generally not regarded as part of the WLM or the broader feminist movement. This is due to the fact they do not conform to the four criteria outlined by della Porta and Diani (1999): 1) being constituted from informal interaction networks made of individuals, groups and organisations, 2) sharing belief and solidarity as movements seek to introduce new issues or reframe old ones, 3) taking part in collective action, and 4) using protest rather than formalised political channels to express ideas. Instead, they would be regarded as the institutionalisation of the WLM. As discussed in previous chapters, a combination of factors has led to particular elements of the WLM's organising coming to characterise it, and the positioning of feminist working as antithetical to a professional context. However, as I go on to argue, marking council equalities working as outside the boundaries of the feminist movement does not fully capture the complexity of the views and working of my interviewees. This blurs the boundary between social movement and state, and shows the way in which people have chosen to work in this space to pursue gender equality in different time periods. This is particularly relevant if we consider that organisational theorists have highlighted the way in which movements can bring social change through organisational behavior and policy (Zald et al., 2005). From this

---

<sup>10</sup> These demands were: equal pay for equal work, equal education and opportunities, free contraception and abortion on demand, free 24 hour nurseries, legal and financial independence, the right to a self defined sexuality and an end to discrimination against lesbians, and freedom from intimidation by threat or use of male violence and an end to the laws, assumptions and institutions that perpetuate male dominance and aggression towards women.

perspective the work taking place on gender equality in local government can be seen as a key way in which social change has been driven by the women's movement. The local government initiatives I studied illustrate the key dimensions of this process: 1) changing categorizations, justice claims and consciousness raising, and by changing assumptions about right actions and routine grounds and practices, 2) through surveillance and sanctions, and 3) indirectly through movement influence on public policy and agencies. In the first case the initiatives built a legitimate claim to address issues particularly facing women, or to put it another way, named the androcentric nature of the councils as institutions. They put in to place new structures and practices to address this. In the second case they monitored these new developments, and worked to integrate them into the councils' regimes of surveillance and evaluation. In the third case they acted to create and shape the policy of the councils as influential public agencies.

Among the workers from the period when the women's initiatives were being established, several of my interviewees from the pioneering and the enthusiastic follower councils made explicit references to their participation in, or experience of, the Women's Liberation Movement. For example, one recounted her participation in consciousness raising as follows:

Wendy: I went to Sheffield '78 to '79 I lived in Sheffield and was part of a sort of, I lived in a household of very political people, and I was part of a women's group there.

FJR: What sort of women's group?

Wendy: Yeah I would say more like a conscious raising group if anything, a group of women being supportive to each other who would meet occasionally to discuss kind of issues that affected them at the time.

FJR: Can you remember any of the things you discussed?

Wendy: Oh em well we talked about things like domestic violence and rape and sexuality and our bodies and um, er those sorts of kind of quite personal issues in lots of ways yeah. Umm and our experiences and um you know that was a, that was a formative experience — I was only there for a year, lived in Sheffield for a year



but that was quite an interesting time. (Wendy, Women's Committee Chair, Pioneering Council)

Wendy clearly remembered her involvement in something seen to typify the WLM as a formative experience. Another interviewee also remembered her attendance at the now iconic Ruskin conference:

I went to some of those early women's meetings in London and the kind of early '70s. [FJR: Did you go to Ruskin?] Yes from you know, from Sussex, because I was there '69 to '72. [FJR: What's your memory of that?] Absolutely chaos [laughs] [FJR: In what way?] Well I mean hugely exciting because there were lots of women around and it was all you know really kind of exciting and, but yeah but also kind of frustrating in that, that nothing ever got properly agreed, there was never any kind of you know, 'this is what we're going to do' or anything. But you know I met lots of people and it was very interesting and at some point you had to kind of decide you know well this is the thing that I'm going to be more interested in and kind of take on. But I mean it was a hugely interesting time, you know massively. And you know I heard some really amazing people speaking and that sort of thing. (Betty, Equality Consultant, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This comment from Betty captures her enthusiastic involvement in this seminal feminist conference, while also expressing some of her ambivalence about the way it was organised. As I go on to argue, this is a salient element in positioning the council equality workers in relation to the feminist movement.

Several of my interviewees recounted visiting Greenham Common, for example:

I found my way to the women's movement fairly early on when I was about 18, and worked in a rape crisis centre, and set up a women's advice and information centre, and we did the whole Greenham thing. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

The notion of doing, 'the whole Greenham thing' suggests it is seen by this interviewee as something standard and taken for granted within her understanding of what feminism means, almost a shorthand. However, this connection to the WLM was not the case for all of the interviewees who had been involved in the early women's initiatives. This was particularly the case in the late developer council where none of my interviewees

recounted being involved with it. Generally though the explicit involvement of the municipal era workers in what has been considered the core of the WLM supports the argument that the two are connected.

The present day gender equality workers were much less likely to have experience of the WLM (only one of them did). This could have been anticipated given the time period during which it took place, but the contemporary workers were also less linked to feminist activism more broadly. Only one of the contemporary workers in the pioneering council, and two in the enthusiastic follower council, were involved in activism outside of their work. Whether or not interviewees were involved with activities seen as core to the WLM, I return to discuss a different way of casting their activities in relation to the feminist movement. In doing so I argue that their orientation towards working to bring about practical change in people's lives in relation to gender equality, allows us to see both their continuity and distinctiveness in relation to the feminist movement. This enables a degree of reconciliation between professionalism and feminism, historically cast in opposition to each other.

If we first move to consider the types of issues all the interviewees raised as important in describing their feminist views, and if we look at the topics they were working on, there is a significant degree of overlap between the WLM and the council initiatives, past and present. The views of the workers who described themselves as feminist encompassed a mixture of the ways in which feminist theory is usually schematised (i.e. radical, socialist, liberal). The seven demands of the women's liberation movement were: equal pay for equal work, equal education and opportunities, free contraception and abortion on demand, free 24 hour nurseries, legal and financial independence, the right to a self defined sexuality and an end to discrimination against lesbians, and freedom from intimidation by threat or use of male violence and an end to the laws, assumptions and institutions that perpetuate male dominance and aggression towards women. When we consider the areas worked on by the council women's initiatives (as discussed in detail in previous chapters), many of these map directly onto the seven demands. In the municipal feminist era those given most attention were equal pay, education, and childcare, but work was also taking place on legal and financial independence, and sexuality, either directly or through the funding of external groups such as rape crisis centres or lesbian groups. Considering the areas being worked on currently, several of these areas were still being addressed, but now as part of the main

business of the council. For example LGBTI rights, childcare, and employment. Work also continues on sexual violence. Thus we can see the links between the WLM and the equality workers within the councils' working.

The discussion so far has begun to explore the way in which ideas, individuals and ways of working can span the boundaries of what is usually seen as the feminist movement. Using the WLM as a point of reference I have shown the way many of the same issues are considered and worked on within the council sites, despite organisational change and shifts in the extent to which workers identify as feminist. It is also valuable to consider what impact having feminist views actually has on the work taking place, particularly given that I left the definition of 'feminist' deliberately open during the interview process. The notion of social movement ideas becoming institutionalised over time is a common theme in the literature, and remains a topic of discussion today. However, this does not elucidate the actual practices through which feminist ideas can shape an organisation, nor consider the individuals seeking to drive this. In the following sections I discuss the concrete ways in which the workers felt their feminist views affected their work. I also examine their motivations for working on gender equality in local government. As discussed above and identified in earlier chapters as a perennial topic, there has always been an ambivalent relationship for some between involvement in the feminist movement, and the way feminists are supposed to organise. This is closely tied to the idea of professional organisation and working. In examining why individuals chose to work on gender equality in local government I argue that their orientation to making practical change provides a useful perspective from which to see both their continuity with the WLM and feminist movement, and a way of reconciling the feminist with the professional.

### *The Significance of the Workers' Feminist Views for their Council Working*

All of the interviewees who worked in the municipal feminist initiatives felt that their feminist views were significant in the way they worked. They saw their position as one where they could use their views to influence people within the council to work in new and different ways. One of the interviewees also discussed the importance of feminist views in the staff they hired:

Harriet: I think it was significant, I mean [X] who was the first admin officer was, is a feminist, and that made a big difference.

FJR: In what way?

Harriet: Because she was on message, she understood why we did things. I mean one of the frustrations I had was that I quite often had to start from the beginning, like eh oh we want to set up a centre for women's health: 'oh why?'. (Harriet, Women's Officer, Late Adopter Council)

This reflects the importance of having workers who recognised and understood gender inequality, and could explain this to other people within the council. It was obviously important to have staff who could see the underlying issues rather than paying lip-service to them, and this knowledge is something which I highlighted as important in relation to the enactment of policy and legislation in chapters six and seven.

Along similar lines, other interviewees described how their feminist views enabled them to keep going in a challenging environment and to fundamentally understand the issues being worked on. For example:

Well if you didn't I don't think you understood, you could understand the challenges or the issues that you were working on. You know from the female perspective, or the different communities' perspectives. So you had to have that understanding, it's an insight, and you can't do a job if you're designated or allocated a task to fulfil and you don't understand it, that to me would be the same. (Geraldine, Women's Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)

Here again, the idea of feminist knowledge and understanding of the working of gender inequality is deemed to be an essential part of being able to carry out their work. In developing the idea of the professional feminist this knowledge is a core component, linking the workers to feminism as a social movement despite their position within local government.

Other interviewees described how their views shaped both the way they organised and the issues they worked on. This supports the findings of earlier research as well as my own examination of the women's initiatives' working in previous chapters. For example one recounted a sense it brought for her:

that we don't have to operate in the kind of traditional, the sort of masculine way that, the masculine kind of adversarial way of relating to one another. And that women can do things differently when they talk about things. That impacted on how I think we ran the actual committee meetings, so I think we ran the meetings in a more informal and open way because of my, because of my feminist views about allowing women to speak in their own way rather than the way that's defined by the council. So that, I suppose that could come from that. And then I suppose my commitment to want to see women achieve in employment was something that was important to me in terms of changing employment practice of the council. Erm I suppose issues to do with things like improving childcare, improving opportunities for women, improving nursery provision, all that sort of stuff. And then improving, you know funding organisations like women's aid um stuff like that that was very important. And all that came from you know my feminism was you know behind my motivation to become involved in those sorts of things I would say. (Wendy, Women's Committee Chair, Pioneering Council)

Whether or not one subscribes to the idea that women fundamentally relate to each other differently to men, this extract shows clearly the way this interviewee's feminist views shaped the issues she sought to address through the council initiative, and the way in which this was organised. As discussed above, this clearly challenged the priorities and organisational norms of the council.

The present day council equality workers also reported that their feminist views were significant for their work. Of course I must note that only two thirds of them identified as feminists to begin with, meaning that this was a less prevalent theme within the contemporary interviews. Of those contemporary workers that did identify as feminist, akin to the workers from the earlier period they felt feminism helped them understand their work. For example:

As an equalities officer you need to have an equalities perspective, so a gender equality perspective is fundamentally a feminist perspective. I can't imagine it being any other way really. Um I think that yes the emphasis on gender equality is that you can have gender equality and just measure outcomes for men and for women, but I think you need to have an underlying feminist understanding in order to understand things like why men are attracted to salary and women do, why women do lower

paid jobs you'd have to have a historical understanding. If you look at housing you need to have an understanding of the development of housing policy and actually it wasn't until the 1980s that women were beginning to get access to public, people take it for granted and they just think oh yeah, you know council housings been here since 1910. Whereas actually women didn't access it because you had to prove you could pay, and women couldn't prove they could pay. So all that, I think you needed to have, yes as an equalities officer you do need to have an understanding of feminism. But again it has to be balanced because other organisations may say all men are this, whereas we can't do that because we can't say all men are this, because it's not true. So we can't stereotype. So um I think there is, yeah you have an underlying feminist understanding but you do have a critical analysis of a feminist statement. If that makes sense. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This idea that feminist knowledge is fundamental to gender equality working supports my argument positioning this as central to their working as professional feminists. The identification of this person with feminism links to the knowledge they need to carry out their professional role. This interviewee presents a sophisticated understanding of gender and feminism — with the complex, structural nature of inequality clearly enunciated in historical context. She uses the example of housing policy to illustrate how this knowledge can be applied to explain and advocate for different policies and practices that will not perpetuate inequality. As discussed in previous chapters, this underlying understanding and knowledge is invaluable in enabling the fullest application or stretching of legislation and council policy on gender equality — and this worker recognises this themselves.

Another interviewee explained the significance of their feminist views saying:

Margot: I think you probably, it probably would be better if it accorded with your value base yeah I think so, I think it would be better if it did. I think otherwise you might struggle to em you might struggle with it a little bit to be quite honest, do you know?

FJR: In what way?

Margot: I suppose you just might not see the point of certain things, I mean I'm sure there are still people that think women shouldn't really earn as much as men. Do you know what I mean, that they think well, why should you expect to, em you know I've heard people say this, you know if someone's on maternity leave and they get invited for a job interview, and they're like well they shouldn't get the chance to do that because they're going to be off. (Margot, Head of Corporate Equalities, Research and Consultation, Late Adopter Council)

This reinforces, though in less emphatic terms, the necessity of feminist understanding to carry out professional work on gender equality. However, although the idea that feminism helped the workers understand their work, and the topics they address, there was less sense that the contemporary workers felt feminism shaped the way they organised their work. This might be linked to the fact that gender equality work has become increasingly standardised through legislative developments, as discussed in chapter seven. As I explored, public consultation and being responsive to the needs of service users is also something which has now become routine within local government. It is no longer something the equality workers must battle to achieve. From the perspective of social movement theory, the idea that both insider and outsider working contribute to bringing about social change is not controversial. Research reviewed in chapters two and three supported this contention, and suggested that historically insider and outsider working add different elements to a change project, even if they are not planned in conjunction with each other, or indeed can be actively opposed. I would argue that my data reveals the way in which local government has been, and remains, a useful site for both insider and outsider working on issues of gender equality.

### *Defining the Council Gender Equality Workers*

Having considered how the past and current gender equality workers relate to feminism and the WLM, I have shown that the equality workers with feminist views feel that these shape the way in which they work within the councils. This includes their knowledge and understanding of gender equality, the topics they address, and the way in which they organise this working. This lays the ground for a discussion of how we should situate them in relation to theorising about activists and organisations. As discussed in chapters two and three, those working on gender equality without being

activists in the traditional sense, or politicians, have not received a huge amount of attention, particularly in the UK context. This is connected to the way in which discourses about feminist organising have positioned it as antithetical to professionalism. Jonathan Dean's work has examined the way in which this has also resulted in a particular way of thinking about what is radical within feminism. He suggests that this should be recast as its world-building capacity rather than its location in a particular (non-state, autonomous) space (Dean, 2010). The idea of the femocrat (the feminist bureaucrat) has been the most developed way of examining those working with a feminist agenda within bureaucratic organisations. However, I argue that this notion does not fully describe the position and working of my sample. Not only is feminism significant in shaping their professional life, but their work within the councils represents a significant challenge on an organisational level — rather than fitting in with existing bureaucratic structures. The significant changes which have taken place in the organisation of local government over the past thirty years also have implications for this. It is arguable that their bureaucratic nature is no longer the defining feature of councils in organisational terms, calling into question whether or not this is the best adjunct to feminist in describing such workers. I posit the focus of the gender equality workers on making practical change as a central element in understanding them as professional feminists, and reconciling these usually opposed concepts. This allows us to see their continuity with the aims and approach of the WLM, while also explaining their rationale for choosing as individuals to engage in seeking change through local government. This shifts the relationship between the feminist movement and local government initiatives away from being a process of inevitable social movement institutionalisation. Instead we can view the decision to work within local government as a practical strategy for bringing about social change, and more broadly as a particular element within a constellation of different approaches to feminist working.

In the pioneering council, the interviewees' accounts of their work revealed the novel and challenging nature of what they were doing within the council. For example one interviewee from the inception of the initiative at the beginning of the 1980s recounted:

Geraldine: I mean the women's unit was very much an activist um in terms of its whole existence was very much about trying to mobilise people to take action to to you know seek redress or to um you know improve courses etc. We were very



engaged with all of those, but don't ask me I can't remember the names, individuals as well as activist groups. And that was probably part of the problem in terms of the political dimension.

FJR: In what way?

Geraldine: Because you were challenging council policies you know from, on one side we were working internally with departments to improve council policies and where there was no change or that didn't work we would then mobilise the voluntary sector and individual women to then challenge the council and empower them to do that. So you know from the council's point of view it was like, hold on, this is an internal provision that is going out there and asking the public to challenge the council's own processes. So you know there was a bit of a conflict there or tensions there. (Geraldine, Women's Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)

This interviewee went on to explain various ways in which the unit had worked on issues inside the council while also facilitating women in the local area to lobby and campaign, including negotiating the complex structures of the council. She stressed the way in which this placed the unit in a difficult position in relation to the rest of the council — pushing against it from within. This illustrates the extent to which the women's initiative was operating in ways even the interviewee herself referred to as 'activist'. That is to say, they were challenging in order to try to shape the council's agenda and working. Thus despite being based in a bureaucratic organisation of the state, this interviewee was not working in a bureaucratic way that would be suggestive of the term femocrat. Similarly, in the enthusiastic follower and late adopter councils, my interviewees were extremely clear about their role in the first initiatives being to challenge the traditional agenda and working of the council. The following quotation illustrates this:

We were trying to change the whole culture and dynamic of the council house, so it was like, oh these women are on another mad one. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This interviewee explained that they intended to challenge the, 'hierarchical power structure' and, 'traditional way of working' to create something new. In some cases this

even went so far as experiencing active hostility from the rest of the council which had to be fought, as another interviewee described:

I don't know, I'm not sure, I'm not sure. I'm sure there were lots of people in the council that didn't want it [laughs]. Well I mean that was obvious when we were trying to have that [inaudible] round departments and trying to look at getting people to represent the issue and all that sort of thing. People just thought it was a waste of time, what was the point of having it. And I don't know if that was the same for people on the outside, I don't know. (Barbara, Women's Unit Worker, Late Adopter Council)

The interviewees themselves enunciated their differences from the other bureaucratic workers of the council, again distinguishing them from femocrats who might embrace this way of working. However, they also motioned towards their separation from people outside the council, and talked about tensions which could arise with campaigners. This supports the point which I am making as to the distinctiveness of professional feminist working, in this case within local government, rather than regarding it as a linear institutionalisation of the feminist movement. In his work looking at feminist demands on the state and feminist civic society organisations, Dean has suggested that the 'radical' in feminist working relates to its ability to enable the imagining and creation of new ways of thinking about the world (Dean, 2010). This is relevant to my present examination of a different arena of feminist working, where the council equality workers were and are seeking to create new ways of thinking and working within the councils.

One interviewee from the enthusiastic follower council explained their position as follows:

FJR: Do you think that you ever felt you had conflicts personally, between the fact that you were in a professional role as a council officer but at the same time had particular political views, whether they were left-wing or feminist? Did you ever feel conflict between those things?

Emily: I didn't ever because...um I was appointed to be a professional feminist and do very practical things within my particular brief and do, make arguments backed up by evidence in certain fora, like the management team fora, so that's what I was

paid to do. The committee had declared itself to be about challenging discrimination and inequalities and I felt that my politics matched that exactly. They were my life-long politics and they matched that. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This unprompted and specific enunciation of the 'professional feminist' reflects the idea that the feminist politics being played out in a professional arena were nonetheless feminist for this location. As I discussed earlier, this apparent oxymoron has not been much explored in the context of the UK — arguably because it doesn't fit neatly with the ways of working seen to typify the WLM and feminist movement. My interviewees themselves repeatedly emphasised their contrasting approach to that of bureaucrats who fitted in with the existing organisation and priorities of the council. One interviewee illustrated this as she described people drawing her attention to the role when it was advertised:

I suppose there was a feeling that, from people within community work etc, that they didn't want it to be a kinda bureaucratic post they wanted it to be filled by somebody who was kinda grass roots as opposed to a bureaucrat. So I think that was one of the things which was certainly said to me at that point. (Harriet, Women's Officer, Late Adopter Council)

One of the ways in which the initiatives sought to challenge the traditional structures and processes of the council (as discussed in earlier chapters) was through opening it up to women in the community using consultation and increasing democratisation. For example, one interviewee recounted developing the system of consultation with and co-optation of local women:

We made it clear that we'd establish a women's committee and have co-options on it. So we'd run elections and we'd have a lesbian woman on, a black or minority ethnic woman, I think I'd need to look this up and [X] might remember how we [decided on the co-optees], a disabled woman. And I can't remember if we had three or four, but for example the disabled woman who was eventually elected went on to join the Labour Party and became a councillor herself. (Tabitha, Women's Committee Chair, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

Tabitha also described the decision to hold women only meetings in order to make it easier for women to participate, and that it was not straightforward gaining agreement for this. Similarly, another interviewee explained their attempts to make events and meetings accessible:

I think because we could shock people a bit more then because we could take our meetings out, we could organise things for international women's day, safety workshops for women. We could do things, I think they'd say nowadays a little bit out of the box, that the committees had to go through certain procedures to do things. And I think we could just say we're going to do this, and nobody could really say you weren't going to do it because nobody had control over us really. (Margaret, Women's Advisory Group Chair, Late Adopter Council)

This drive to be inclusive and engage with women reflected a working principle central to the feminist movement being taken up with great effort within the councils. There does not appear to be evidence that working within the council presented an easier option for interviewees than traditional activist channels, although it is not a path that everyone would be able to or want to follow. As discussed earlier, the attempts of the workers to think, 'out of the box' is an element to understanding their feminist challenge position within the council, and this is supported by Dean's suggestion that radicality relates to the capacity of work to enable things to be seen in new ways rather than the site in which it is located (2010).

Another facet of the equality workers' challenge position arguably results from their situation neither fully inside, nor outside, the council as an organisation of the state or the feminist movement. As mentioned earlier, at points the interviewees reflected on facing hostility from feminist activists outside the council, and also from left-wing activists including trade unions. Thus they were clearly distinct from the activists outside the council, while sitting in a position of challenge within the council itself. One of the interviewees from the late adopter initiative eloquently expressed this difficult position saying:

One of the challenges I found on the job was that kind of, one you're a woman, you've got women's groups expecting something of you because you work in an official women's unit. And then you had to deal with the kind of like, the bureaucracy of working for a council. Em and I sometimes found it quite difficult

because you never knew where you fitted, because the women's groups hated you because you weren't doing enough for what you wanted. The council folk hated you because [laughs] they thought you were trying to change things inside. And you were stuck in the middle going, 'arghhh' [laughs]. (Barbara, Women's Unit Worker, Late Adopter Council)

This interviewee went on to explain how, 'stuck in the middle' they could feel, sympathetic to the external groups as well as stressed by their demands on the council. These conflicts are insightful as I situate the workers and the initiatives in relation to existing work on social movements and activists. Firstly, the conflict experienced (in some instances) with the left supports the argument for the distinctiveness of municipal feminism in relation to the municipal socialism of the period. The women's initiatives evidently presented a challenge to the leftist establishment in some cases. Secondly, it could be tempting to read the conflict experienced with some feminist activists as a sign of discontinuity between the feminist movement and the initiatives. However, I think that 1) given the great diversity of views within the WLM and feminist movement (as documented in chapter two), and 2) the considerable affinities between the interests and working of the movement and those of the women's initiatives, this conflict is more sensibly read as an example of the multiplicity of the identities and methods of the WLM, and broader movement. This supports the argument introduced earlier, that while connected to the feminist movement more broadly, the professional feminist workers are not simply its linear institutionalisation, nor femocrats working in sync with the bureaucratic organisation of the councils. The work of Rosi Braidotti discussed in earlier chapters is also useful in relation to this subject position. The idea that the workers inhabit a nomadic subject position — neither fully activists outside, nor accepted within the council organisation — goes some way to describing both the costs and opportunities this holds for them as professional feminists. As I have also discussed in relation to my data in previous chapters, the space occupied by the workers is one where significant interpretation takes place in relation to the discursive politics of gender equality. Their nomadic position is also a productive one which has significant implications for the way in which legislation and policy are stretched, bent, shrunk and fixed in the process of being enacted by and within councils.

In the accounts of the contemporary workers there remains a sense of working to challenge the rest of the council in relation to gender equality. However this is tempered

with an increased sense of pragmatism and negotiation. For example, in the pioneering council one of my interviewees explained the way in which they currently worked to support and develop the understanding of different departments in relation to equalities:

equality should be part and parcel of a manager's role, and that you shouldn't have, as well as delivering, you should have a passion for wanting to deliver a good service, which means a service which is for all your community. And that if certain communities aren't accessing it, you do something about it. So I think it's that, but I accept that in some areas, perhaps more traditional areas of the council that's harder to do. And sometimes it's harder to understand. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

When prompted, this interviewee went on to explain how this might be raised in the parks department of the council saying:

If you know, a particular ethnic community aren't using your service or don't seem to be doing terribly well out of your service, is there an issue there and should you do something about it? Um you know, oh I don't know, people who run universal services, parks could say well a park's a park what's the equality issue there? And you don't want to make up equality issues as I said before, but you know there are issues about disabled people using parks, and safety in parks which might put off women with children and so forth and things like that. I'm not saying, I'm only using that as an example, in fact our parks are really good. But it's that sort of conversation sometimes where having somebody who has an understanding of equality can be quite useful. A bit of that awareness raising of equality issues. (Eleanor, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Pioneering Council)

Thus we can see that challenging and guiding the rest of the council is still an essential element to the role of the equality worker, but framed within the language and altered context of new public management. For example, with the emphasis on service provision and the idea that attending to equalities should be a part of all managers' roles i.e. mainstreamed. We could read this shift in language as reflective of a fundamentally less radical (in Dean's terms) approach to work on gender equality. In some senses it does appear that the work taking place is less challenging, and instead just a check on the rest of the organisation. This could reflect the influence of the previous decades of work undertaken within the council by the women's initiative having shifted the

benchmark. However, we could then question why the working on gender equality has not continued to be challenging to the same extent, working from this higher mark. I would suggest that this is at least in part due to the significant reduction in capacity for this type of work, in terms of resources and staffing. This limits the capacity for work to take place which is creative and challenging beyond routine monitoring. This connects back to the point made in earlier chapters, that visioning is often what is left behind within the changing emphasis on work to mainstream gender within local government.

In the enthusiastic follower council there also remains a distinct sense of needing to challenge to drive forward the gender equality agenda, but with a consciously pragmatic slant. As one interviewee explained:

I'm far more pragmatic and opportunist than I was when I first started. (Jenny, Principle Equalities Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This interviewee also discussed their sense of 'checking' their own institutionalisation, to stay sharp and driving equalities forward — but making sure to do so in a way that bridges the agendas of external campaigners and the council. This interviewee recognised the need simultaneously to remain connected to those campaigning outside the council, and felt she could share her 'insider' power with them to create change. This is a positive drawn from her nomadic positioning in relation to the feminist movement and the state. Similarly, another interviewee in the same council explained their ability to influence the agenda of the council through advising its politicians, and supporting outside campaigners to use available channels of influence. In doing so they described being careful to remain both professionally credible, and credible to relevant feminist campaigners. This interviewee later reflected on the way in which the role of equality workers had changed over the previous decades — specifically stating that you cannot be an, 'activist transplanted into the council', and the need to have specific knowledge and skills, for example in relation to research. Thus we can see how the council workers undertake translation, in this case between activists and the council (Page, 2011), and also the continued opportunity presented by the council as a location for those outside to influence its working.

In the late adopter council, despite the difficult financial climate the workers described still working to the best of their ability to raise gender equality issues, for example:

We're in a financial climate where we're cutting whatever it is we're cutting every year from our budget so we know that's not really going to happen with the current financial climate, it simply isn't. But it doesn't stop you saying wait a minute this isn't you know, we're not going to be able to make a difference unless these things change. (Margot, Head of Corporate Equalities, Research and Consultation, Late Adopter Council)

So despite being in a difficult position institutionally and financially, it is still seen as important to represent and attempt to work on equality issues, and strive for cultural change. One of my interviewees stressed:

If we're just changing because we're forced to change, we've not tackled the attitudes. And if we don't change the attitudes I don't know that we're really going to really affect cultural change successfully. (Dawn, Senior Human Resources Officer, Late Adopter Council)

As I have shown, during the municipal feminist era the workers strove to challenge the working of the councils, in terms of the issues addressed and modes of organising. This included opening up the councils to local women, and goes beyond the idea of the feminist bureaucrat. This 'visioning' is something which has been identified as important to feminist activity in different arenas — from the theorising of gender mainstreaming (discussed in earlier chapters) to Jonathan Dean's work suggesting that feminist radicality inheres to its world-building capacity. In the contemporary councils this sense of challenge undoubtedly remains, and public engagement is still viewed as important to them. However, the contrast in working styles between the equality workers and rest of the councils is less pronounced today. This is arguably due to the broader changes that have taken place in public sector management, and the way elements pioneered by the women's initiatives (such as public consultation and attending to equality) have become a commonplace part of local government working. As I have discussed, although the quality of the consultation has changed, the councils remain sites where outsiders can have influence. The recent political focus on localism, also adds to this opportunity, and there are concrete examples of activists successfully using this as a channel of influence. For example, the campaign around the way lap



dancing clubs are licenced led to additions to the 2009 Policing and Crime Act<sup>11</sup> which have subsequently been used by local groups to stymie the growth in clubs. This could be an area where feminist activity by those outside the council can continue to be fruitfully targeted. Of course, this is limited by the resources, capacity and interests of the outsiders participating in this, and the responsiveness of councils themselves. On the one hand we could say that the contemporary initiatives appear to have less capacity to envisage new formulations and ways of working than their municipal feminist forerunners, which would fit with a narrative of decline. However, I would argue that this is not the result of the organisation nor location of their work (within councils) and is more a reflection of the resources available to the initiatives. This is particularly evident when we compare the differences between the three sites I studied.

### *Professional Feminists*

By looking closely at the ideas and working of the equality workers past and present I have shown the way in which they span the feminist and the professional. The equality workers seek creatively to challenge within the council to achieve feminist aims, pushing outside the definition of the femocrat to envisage things in new ways. They carry this out in paid roles which at times positions them in conflict with activists outside their organization, and people within it. Thus far I have highlighted the way in which feminist knowledge and understanding is regarded by the workers as necessary to carry out their professional roles. This makes feminism an important element of their professional capacity. I also argue that the orientation of the equality workers towards making practical change in people's lives, in relation to gender equality, functions in two ways. It presents a useful way of understanding their continuity with the WLM and feminist movement, and also their distinctive contribution to feminist activism as a multifaceted project. In addition to using their feminist knowledge and understanding to envisage the world differently, and engendering this in other people and institutions, this practical drive is an element in bringing about social change. As discussed earlier, social change is often enacted through change in organisations' — such as councils —

---

<sup>11</sup> There has been research examining this legislation (for example Carline, 2011, 2012, Hubbard and Colosi, 2013) however this hasn't focused on the relationship feminist activity has to it.

agendas, policies and practices. The ‘professional feminist’ is one way of understanding this particular position within the broader arena of feminist thought and activity.

As outlined above, many, but not all of my interviewees considered themselves feminists, and some had experience of activism as part of the women’s liberation movement. Significantly, regardless of their connection to the WLM, the majority of my interviewees expressed the rationale for their work as the aim to engender practical changes in women’s lives. This arguably chimes with the research I discussed earlier, suggesting that community work was an important precursor to council office holding for women (Martlew et al., 1985). When considering the background of my municipal feminist interviewees, even those without explicit experience of the WLM had been involved in community work, often with women. This was the case for all three interviewees in the late adopter and enthusiastic follower councils, and two in the pioneering council. For example:

I was involved in that as a Labour, em activist. (Rachel, Women’s Officer, Pioneering Council)

I’m not involved in any politics or activism in terms of the formal sense. But I am in terms of um, well I’m from a community that still is embracing the equalities agenda as it was in the UK in the ‘70s. So I’m very much an advocate for women from my community about trying to promote, trying to challenge some of their fears about women’s rights. (Geraldine, Women’s Unit Worker, Pioneering Council)

For Geraldine this included domestic violence, sexual abuse and education. Similarly, all three interviewees in the enthusiastic follower council talked about their community work. For example one with a background in trade unions and further education recounted:

I got politicised on something that wasn’t directly to do with women, I mean I got politicised on trying to stop an inner-city road scheme through [X] which was where I lived, and realised that actually to change things this was going to be a decision which was then [X] council, it was going to wreck people’s lives and spoil quite an urban environment. And actually to change things you had to get [X] as a council to vote, to see that this was not in their interest if they wanted to be elected, and actually it was a Conservative council. So my experience was activism round that

sense but also in the community and voluntary sector being involved with the [X] law and resource centre, which at the time people were setting up people had set up not just to rep people on an individual basis but to represent groups of tenants and so on, on a collective basis. (Tabitha, Women's Committee Chair, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This interviewee had spent considerable periods of time dedicated to working on community projects that she felt would improve people's daily lives in the area around where she lived, and was passionate about these. The emphasis was on acting to make change, and convincing others of what was needed, rather than discussing or theorising in a more abstract or universal way. A similar account was also given by one of the interviewees in the late adopter council:

Well first of all I was a community worker, and I worked in the East end of [X]. And most of my work was working with women, so, working with poor women in [A], [B], [C], and at that point got involved in the development of women's health fairs, in the '80s, a lot of women's health groups, em and generally that was the start I suppose of a bigger women's equality movement. (Harriet, Women's Officer, Late Adopter Council)

This interviewee reflected on the centrality of community work to her life, and what she felt driven to pursue. She went on to talk more about the different community development projects she had carried out, stressing that it was women who were key to this in terms of anti-poverty, health, and education work. This arguably also represents a formulation of the argument more often seen in relation to over-seas development; advocating for working on gender equality or funding women's projects on the basis of their benefits to the wider community.

Another interviewee explained her background and frustration with traditional politics in contrast to thematic work within the council saying:

As a teenager I was a member of the Labour Party Young Socialists and flirted with Militant quite a bit and that sort of thing, but in the end made the decision that that kind of party politics route didn't suit me. And to be honest em [FJR: Why?] a lot of the reason for that was because it was so male dominated, very, very male dominated. I suppose that was the main reason. I also didn't like the confrontational

side of politics to be honest I just couldn't be bothered with it. I just thought life was too short [laughs]. So but then I got more interested in more sort of thematic work. (Barbara, Women's Unit Worker, Late Adopter Council)

So working directly with individuals and communities to support them to bring positive changes in their lives, and make their voices heard, was important to all of the municipal feminist interviewees. This was the case whether or not it took an explicitly feminist form or title. When we examine the way in which they reflect on the work they undertook within the women's initiatives, the desire to see concrete results and address problems faced by women is palpable. For example, in the pioneering council:

I think there was good stuff done by the GLC women's committee, but I think I, along with a number of other people was, shared a bit of a concern that it was a bit too much and too scatter gun and not sufficiently focused. So the GLC women's committee I think probably would have been going — well you've probably got — I would say a year or two before we started in [X] is that about right? [FJR: In '82 yeah] yeah, so I think what was very clear in my mind was focus, um, and that you couldn't do everything and that you, I mean this is, this is kind of, I'm not sure if it's a rationalisation, I think I was very aware that it was about changing attitudes and culture and practice. But I think I was very aware too on the focus on the specific. (Rachel, Women's Officer, Pioneering Council)

This illustrates the desire of the interviewee to create clear and concrete outcomes, through being focused on specific goals — rather than taking a, 'scatter gun' approach. This also reflects a sense of responsibility for the outcomes achieved, something that is part of professional conduct. This contributes to my argument that many of my interviewees should be understood as professional feminists.

Another interviewee at the pioneering council surmised her goals in relation to changing women's lives in a quotidian sense saying:

I suppose my commitment to want to see women achieve in employment was something that was important to me in terms of changing employment practice of the council. Erm I suppose issues to do with things like improving childcare, improving opportunities for women, improving nursery provision, all that sort of stuff. And then improving, you know funding organisations like Women's Aid um

stuff like that that was very important. And all that came from you know, my feminism was you know behind my motivation to become involved in those sorts of things I would say. (Wendy, Women's Committee Chair, Pioneering Council)

This outlines a range of practical outcomes, driven by feminist views, that I argue is key to positioning professional feminists. The other municipal era interviewees at the pioneering council also talked about their aims to change attitudes and lives in relation to sexual and domestic abuse. In the enthusiastic follower council the interviewees were similarly very focused on practical rather than esoteric action. As one recounted her desire, 'to change things' saying:

I'd come to the conclusion that if you wanted to change things you actually had to have a political voice, so right, you know you could have single issues campaigns but if you wanted to change things on a broader front you had to influence and be part of the Labour Party, and by that time what we'd also got was the GLC in London with Ken Livingston as leader having taken over as a bit of a coup in the leadership where they'd also already adopted a women's committee. So I personally, Valerie [Wise<sup>12</sup>] may not remember this, but I personally went to see Valerie and talk to her about how that had worked and we decided in the early 1980s and so what we were thinking about was not just to replicate what had happened in the GLC, but how we could put stuff into practice in [X] if Labour won control. (Tabitha, Women's Committee Chair, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

Another interviewee reflected on the ambivalence towards the women's initiative of some feminists, but stressed that on balance it provided a stable base from which to create concrete change:

I thought it was worth doing because it gave a, it gave a kind of source, a sort of stable source of being able to do something. And I also thought the recognition of it being taken as a kind of important, you know that sort of external recognition of it being an important aspect I thought was important, you know that that was a, that was quite a critical issue um from my point of view and um others. That you know, that women's equality is something which is not just of concern to you know a bunch of radical women, but is something that actually is of concern to, or should be

---

<sup>12</sup> Valerie Wise was chair of the GLC Women's Committee and was also interviewed as part of Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project.

of concern to organisations you know. I thought that was an important step forward. (Betty, Equality Consultant, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This illustrates recognition of the issue as a dimension of the claims being made. As discussed earlier, this is a constituent part of bringing about social change through the medium of a large organisation. Yet at another point, this same interviewee explained her problem with discussion and theory as opposed to affecting change for women, suggesting that recognition was not sufficient. She described how this led to her shifting from outsider activism of the late 1960s, to working in local government:

partly my kind of background of, my dad in particular was kind of interested in the Labour movement and politics and so on, and used to talk about how you know you might need to compromise in order to move forward and things like that. And kind of arguing about that and saying no, you know, you have to have principles [FJR: You would argue?] yes. And then I suppose when I was at university you saw, 'cos I went to Sussex in 1969, so just after the paint throwing over the American ambassador, and the Vietnam war and all of that, Tariq Ali and so on. And Sussex was a hugely political place, and yet so much of it just seemed so kind of esoteric and I got quite frustrated by that. Because it wasn't about how do we make things better for people, it was about how can we get our ideas recognised as right, and other people's ideas recognised as wrong. And while part of me is drawn to that on a kind of intellectual basis, I also think, well, it's about making a difference to people, that's what we always ought to have in our minds. (Betty, Equality Consultant, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

So although engaged with politics and interested in discussing ideas carefully, she ultimately wanted to be, 'making a difference to people' rather than winning arguments. We can see then why local government might be appealing for someone with these beliefs and motivations. This interviewee went on to describe their attendance at the Ruskin conference as really exciting, yet also lacking in concrete outcomes. She remembered it as:

kind of frustrating in that, that nothing ever got properly agreed, there was never any kind of you know 'this is what we're going to do' or anything. (Betty, Equality Consultant, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

Considered in relation to Nancy Fraser's theorising of the different axes of justice (Fraser, 1995, 1997, 2008), we can read Betty's stress on making change as the axis of redistribution, in conjunction with the existence and acknowledgement of the women's initiative as the axis of recognition. Thus without denigrating the importance of either approach, her preference can be seen to reflect a choice of which part of this project to undertake.

Another interviewee explained that having attended the consultation meetings carried out by the women's initiative, she was determined to apply for the women's officer post. This was because she wanted to ensure it was done by someone with a practical, and not just academic, understanding of women and their lives. She recounted:

I sat on a row of women and there were three women, please don't be offended, three academic women sitting next to me who were, who had the job packs for these women's officers' posts, and were talking about how they were applying to do this work. And I was kind of out in the sticks, in the nuts and bolts of all sorts of horrendous things that happened really for those young women that I worked with. And I was so horrified that the people, the women who might take these roles would take a theoret, had a theoretical feminist approach kind of solely really, um to the work, that I came home, the jobs closed 36 hours later. I came home and the following morning I got the job pack. I filled in the application and my partner took it and gave it in by hand on his way to his work the following day, so it hit the deadline for closure. (Emily, Women's Officer, Enthusiastic Follower Council)

This interviewee really enunciated the argument I am making about the importance of practical outcomes for the professional feminists. The fact she did this while also conscious of my own position as an academic woman emphasises its significance for her, and we laughed about this when she raised the point. For Emily, her experience of working in the community with women and striving to support them, was a fundamental part of the women's officer's role. It was this that drove her to pursue the work in local government, in contrast to taking a more academic or theoretical approach to feminism.

In the late adopter council too, the stress on the practical change which the women's initiative had the potential to bring was evident in the interview data. One interviewee described the compromise position of attempting to be a feminist within a bureaucratic organisation. This was presented as a contrast — she did not see herself as a bureaucrat

(or indeed femocrat). This supports the argument put forward earlier that professional feminist equality workers occupy a connected but distinct position in relation to the feminist movement. The value of this nomadic position in her mind was being able to make change and influence, as this quotation illustrates:

I suppose feeling that I was in a very privileged position because I was being able to speak to decision makers, policy makers, em heads of service delivery, and persuade them that they could do things differently. So I mean I think that was what drove me, and seeing that you know when we developed the [training centre] for example, we had 20 women every year who graduated and went on to do things that they would never have done you know em otherwise. So you know I think it was because we had some of those positive, eh kind of demonstration projects. And actually you were seeing women who had been supported into better outcomes, that you could see that what you had to do was continue to make further change so that it wasn't just about em those 20 women. (Harriet, Women's Officer, Late Adopter Council)

This interviewee herself talked in terms of concrete, 'better outcomes' for the women involved with the project, as what drove her work. Another interviewee spoke of how her experience with younger women led to her feeling she needed to take action to change their lives for the better:

It was speaking to younger women and realising how little things had changed and how much they were still struggling. And thinking then um my eldest daughter was married and had a child and having to pay for child care and that. And it was really getting tough for the younger women, rather than getting better I think it was getting worse for them. And I think that's what sort of got me thinking, we can do something to change it, it doesn't always have to be like this. (Margaret, Women's Advisory Group Chair, Late Adopter Council)

Another interviewee gave a very eloquent account of the way in which local government working differed from both formal and activist political routes to making change. This represents the crux of my argument regarding the workers: the centrality of practical change to their motivations, and their distinctiveness in comparison to the idea of the femocrat. Working for the council represented a way to really make a difference, rather than through confrontational political activism:



I'd left university because I didn't like it and went to work for the council. And well, as I say, realised you could actually make a difference in your working life and not just in political life so, and that's why every job that I've done has been about something that I'm quite passionate about. Came from a very deprived background myself so was interested in that kind of, the whole equality issue completely, about women, about class, about race etc. So yeah, so just was always interested in that em And then as I say when the women's unit job came up I just thought it would be a perfect way of doing something which I cared about passionately, but could actually do make a living out of it and actually make a difference at the same time. (Barbara, Women' Unit Worker, Late Adopter Council)

As this comment raises the issue, it is also important to acknowledge the significance or indeed necessity of being able to, 'make a living out of it' for the workers, rather than denigrating it as a motivating factor. Being able to participate in activism requires time and financial support, affecting who can be involved. From the perspective of those who must work for a living, it is evident how pursuing gender equality in local government could be an appealing path.

Particularly in the case of the contemporary workers, we need to distinguish between those who did and did not identify as feminists. I am not suggesting that we should consider all of the workers as professional feminists, only those who personally identified as feminist. Looking at how the contemporary workers talked about their work on equality, the emphasis on making practical change to people's daily lives is less dominant, and less strongly linked to their motivations for working in the council environment. Yet having said this, the contemporary interviewees did still talk about concrete practical change they wanted or had made as important. I believe part of the reason for this resides, as discussed earlier, in the fact that changes in service provision, in understanding and recognition of gender equality (in part created by the municipal feminist initiatives), and post-feminism more broadly — mean there is less sense of urgency and breaking new ground with the work being undertaken. For example, whether or not one considers the position of women to have improved since the first initiatives were formed, it is the case that attention has been addressed to gender equality, which in itself affects how people regard the topic. It is also evident that, as discussed in earlier chapters, the work undertaken by the initiatives today, as opposed to during the municipal feminist era, is less about the direct provision of services.

Although there was less emphasis on the practical in the motivations of the contemporary workers who identified as feminist, there remained several shared characteristics between the municipal feminist and contemporary workers who identified themselves this way. I believe these common features mean we can characterise them as professional feminists. These include: being paid to work on gender equality, working in a professional capacity with responsibility for the outcomes produced, using knowledge and understanding of feminism to carry out work on gender equality, and sitting in a challenge position within the council in relation to its agenda and organizing. I have argued that these individuals sit in a space between outside activists and insiders of the local state, but that their position is not adequately described by the idea of the femocrat. The imaginative and challenging element of their professional feminist work within the councils, akin to the visioning required for successful gender mainstreaming, and radicality as suggested by Dean, means that we should consider their working as part of a broader constellation of feminist action.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has examined the relationship of the past and present equality workers to feminism, and how we can best position them in terms of existing theory about social movements and ‘femocrats’. It built on the discussion in earlier chapters as to the significance of these individuals in shaping and enacting gender equality work in local government. I began by showing the extent to which both past and present equality workers consider themselves feminist (although the contemporary workers less universally), and the way in which they felt this was significant for the work they undertake within the councils. Only some of my interviewees had been directly engaged with the activism of the WLM. However, the ideas and issues that occupied it overlapped significantly with those of the council initiatives, complicating the traditional account of the boundaries between social movement and state. I argued that the feminist identification and knowledge many of the workers displayed, and which they deemed necessary for their professional work, is something that characterises them as professional feminists. I went on to discuss the ways in which the workers occupy a challenge position with the councils in terms of priorities and ways of organising — as opposed to operating rigidly within their existing structures. The workers are positioned

neither fully inside the council, nor outside it as activists, despite their connections to both. As my interviewees discussed, this can be a difficult and productive place to inhabit akin to Braidotti's account of the nomadic subject. Yet they act to interpret and envisage new ways of thinking and working within the councils. This distinguishes the workers past and present who considered themselves feminist as professional feminists rather than femocrats. Similarly, I argued that the orientation of the workers to bringing about practical change, and their conscious choice to work within local government, is both a link to, as well as distinction from, other feminist activity. Thus their position can be understood as one element among many approaches to feminist activity, rather than the straightforward institutionalisation of the WLM. In this way we can see the distinctive contribution of professional feminists to creating social change, albeit in an arena that has not traditionally been examined in relation to social movements.

## 9. Conclusion

It is very easy to take for granted the huge legislative, social, political and economic changes that have taken place since the 1960s in relation to gender equality and the way it is regarded in the UK. The obviousness and profoundness of these changes at once means we might not think them worth investigating, nor as something contingent. The central role played by the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in this change can also be dismissed, or more ironically, acknowledged without more detailed analysis. There is generally consensus that there remains great scope to undertake research on various facets of the WLM. Inspired by the creation of *Sisterhood and After*, an oral history of the Women's Liberation Movement, I took the personal accounts of local government employees as a jumping-off point. This may not at first glance appear to be an obvious research trajectory to take. However, looking at local government gender equality working in relation to the WLM, and over time, is useful as it is positioned at an intersection where we can ask questions about feminism and the state, and feminist organising. This thesis has sought to do several things. By focusing on a very particular area of activity — local government gender equality work — it contributes to the conversation about the legacy and influence of the WLM. As I have shown throughout, there are many strands of continuity between the WLM, municipal feminism and contemporary gender equality working in local government. Using concrete examples from three case study sites I have examined some of the ways work on gender equality in local government has been undertaken since the era of municipal feminism in the 1980s. In 1990, Susan Halford suggested that despite the various factors women's initiatives relied upon for their success and ongoing existence, they had forged, 'a connection between local government and feminist politics which cannot simply be eradicated from people's minds' (Halford, 1990: 318). Much has changed over the past three decades, yet I have shown the significance of what took place in the 1980s for the present, and the connections between this and the feminist movement. In doing so I have also addressed several practical and theoretical debates about the feminist movement, its organising, and its relationship to professionalism and the state. I have highlighted alliances between different strands of feminist thought, different ways of organising, and different time periods, that are not always revealed in accounts of feminism rooted in a single discipline.

In terms of the contingency of the gains won over the previous half century, we need only look at the government's recent 'red tape challenge' and its examination of equalities legislation, to gain a sense of how such measures can still be viewed as a luxury or even hindrance. This thesis has also looked at the significance of recent legislative changes for some of the organisations and individuals who have to act on them in local government. This is just one part of the constellation of areas and approaches that make up the ongoing project of bringing about gender equality. However, it is nonetheless valuable to consider in its own right not least as it affects the lives of so many people.

An important theme binding together different areas of this thesis has been the examination of the shifts in discourses and practices of feminism and gender equality over the past 30 years. This began in chapter two where I discussed the origins and organisation of the WLM, and how this has been understood by social movement theorists. In particular I highlighted the way in which different elements within the WLM, such as radical and socialist, can be connected through their mutual formation of the prefigurative politics and organising of the movement. This is something not usually made explicit in writing on this topic. Similarly, I explored the complex relationship the WLM had with both the state and the idea of professionalism. In doing so I underlined elements which have led to a lack of attention being given to the ways in which the feminist and the professional might interact, including antipathy to the idea of formally organised women present at points both inside and outside the movement. By looking at the recent history of the feminist movement, and a particular site of activity on gender equality (local government), I have been able to consider the interlinked areas of feminist discourse and practice. This has highlighted the way in which the subject, remedy, organisation, terminology, and location of work to address gender inequality can both change and remain static, independently of each other. I have shown how this takes place in ways that challenge a straightforward account of temporal progress or decline, or of theory leading practice. These areas have implications for the type and scope of work that can take place, and how it is understood. I have also emphasised the spaces of interpretation that exist between these areas, and the significance of individuals who can intervene at these points, inhabiting the mid-space neither fully inside nor outside the state. For example, in chapters five and six I explored how the subject of the council gender equality working, and its organisation, both has and has

not shifted since the 1980s. In chapter seven I highlighted the significance of, and interpretive space around, recent pieces of gender equality legislation, demonstrating differences in the councils' responses to the Gender and Public Sector Equality Duties. This included considering the way in which the codification of the subject within the legislation has changed, and some of the implications of this for understandings of, and work on gender and intersectionality. In chapter eight I specifically considered the individuals inhabiting and working within this space as professional feminists.

Another important strand of this research has been to shine a light on the implementation of recent equalities legislation in local government, and the work that goes on around this. Much of the work considering recent equalities legislation in the UK has done so from a legal or theoretical perspective, so my research adds a useful insight into the practical engagement of councils with this. This is also valuable as I undertook my research at the point at which the councils were beginning to deal with the changing legislation and introduction of the Public Sector Equality Duty. In chapter three I introduced existing work that has considered the development of equalities legislation and local government. This highlighted the importance of local government as an arena for the development of equalities working. By attending to the detail of some of the institutions and individuals involved in this, I argued for their significance in several concentric areas. Moving outward from the centre, this begins with the local government equality workers — in many cases I have argued professional feminists — whose knowledge and skills can be used to translate and enact legislation into policy and the working of different council departments. As I have shown throughout this thesis by comparing my three case study sites with each other, and over time, the understanding of these workers makes a great difference in terms of what is understood as the subject of equalities work, written into the councils' policies, and how this is then enacted. This insight relied on my methodological choice to combine the analysis of documents with the reflections of those who create(d) and use(d) them. This juxtaposition enabled me to explore some of the dynamics around the implementation of legislation. The wide-ranging influence and impact of local government on the lives of the populations they serve has and continues to be significant. This is true in terms of the provision of services as well as their position as large employers. The individuals involved in this work are also supported by the framework of legislative requirements — which has implications for the conceptualisation of gender and the extent to which

this is seen and addressed in an intersectional manner along with the other equalities strands. Although not a panacea or a sign of the successful ‘achievement’ of gender equality, the existence of equalities legislation nonetheless has played a role in standardising the work that takes place within local government, providing a tool for professional feminists challenging from within, and those outside the council to hold them to account. These elements combine to have implications for the way we might want to view local government more clearly as a constructive focus of attention for feminist activists — due to the combination of its range and influence, spaces of interpretation around this, and potential to influence them.

Alongside the empirical concerns of this thesis in relation to how gender equality work is understood and enacted, I have also used the arena of local government to ask questions about the WLM and feminist movement more broadly: its legacy and influence, its evaluation, and its relationship to and boundary with the state. Grounded in the creation of the oral history archive of the WLM, and through my consideration of local government gender equality work since the 1980s, I have traced the movement of feminist ideas and ways of organising. In doing so I have revealed the consequences of particular understandings of what feminist organising means, as working to separate (historically and analytically) projects that share similarities and are complementary. My data analysis has drawn out the connections between the different time periods, arenas and ideas, in ways that are not usually explicit in existing work on the feminist movement. For example, I demonstrated the ways in which the principles of gender mainstreaming have inflected both the early women’s initiatives and work on gender equality taking place today. The findings drawn from looking across these different fields have implications for how we conceive of the feminist movement, its boundaries, where activism can take place, its participants, and its methods of organising, as well as its history and ongoing trajectory. My decision to undertake a socio-historical study looking at current local government gender equality working, alongside municipal feminism and the WLM, has facilitated a useful contribution to these areas. It has enabled me to show the meshing of the past and present, without giving priority to either. I have used local government gender equality working as an example that troubles a range of standard accounts of the feminist movement, situated as it is where gender equality is worked on professionally by paid workers of the state. I have argued it complicates understandings of where, how and by who feminist work takes place. It is

arguable that the WLM always posed a challenge to the way in which social movement theory has conceptualised the relationship between movement and state. In addition to this, the location of and mode of organising work has long been a preoccupation of activists and those who study them. My account of municipal feminism and contemporary work on gender equality in local government has added to this tradition, and I developed the idea of the ‘professional feminist’. It has also reinforced the utility of considering and evaluating work with an awareness of the genealogy of its framing. I first considered existing research theorising the position of individuals working on feminist topics in professional spaces, and organised in ways traditionally seen as at odds with feminism. Using interviews with council equalities workers in chapter eight I then argued that those who considered themselves feminists contribute to a broader feminist project of social change, and do so in ways outside the usual accounts of feminist activism, or of ‘femocrats’. In this way I sought to reconcile the usually opposed concepts of the feminist, and the professional.

Developed from a consideration of the extant literature on the feminist movement and local government gender equality working, my first research question asked how municipal feminist working compared practically to that taking place in councils today, and how the two might be connected. The work undertaken by municipal feminist initiatives (primarily during the 1980s) was pioneering in both its ideas and organisation. It is timely to revisit this in relation to what takes place today in local government on gender equality. I addressed this research question using three sites of local government as case studies, where I conducted interviews and gathered documents related to their equality working from the point at which they established women’s initiatives to the present day. Examining my data in relation to work already carried out in this area, in chapter five I compared the municipal feminist initiatives and present day council working across five dimensions. These were: their organisational position and form, their work on issues internal to the council, their work on issues external to the council, their relationship with the public, and their engagement in national networks. These elements of local government working obviously sit within a wider array of organisational, social, political and economic factors. Taking into account the broad changes that have shaped the working of all three councils, I argued that distinctive elements present at the inception of the initiatives can be seen to have endured in two of the dimensions. These were the organisational position and form of the initiatives, and



their work on public engagement. In the case of the latter I also discussed the significance of consultation as an ongoing mode of influence for those outside the council, albeit one with limitations. Seeking to unpick the complexity of continuity and change in each site to compare the past and present working, I utilised insights from feminist institutionalist approaches, arguing that these dimensions contributed to shaping the work that takes place today, in conjunction with other contextual factors. A key insight of feminist institutionalism is the understanding that institutions are normative and not neutral (Mackay and Meier, 2003, Mackay, 2011). This ties to the longstanding feminist understanding of the interconnection between public (state) and private (family) institutions in (re)producing inequalities. Institutions, formal and informal, can be seen as gendered and having gendered effects (Mackay, 2011). The interplay of formal and informal institutions, as well as the ideas of historicism and path dependency were also useful in analysing my data to consider how women's initiatives were established and developed. My findings support the utility of considering organisational history when seeking to understand contemporary manifestations of work on a specific topic, and particularly in understanding the variation between different organisations outwardly of the same type, and with parallel roles.

In chapter six I addressed my second research question that asked how contemporary gender equality working compared with municipal feminism conceptually. This is intertwined with the previous question focused on the practical element of this area, yet is usefully examined separately in order to understand the relationship between the two. In addition to this, it aids in considering how local government working relates to developments in gender and feminist theory. I sought to answer my research question by drawing on the interviews with equality workers and council documents from both time periods. I was interested in how the workers and the official texts from each council understood the subject of their work, and the processes at play around the discursive politics of gender equality. In examining this I focused on three broad areas — the subject of the work (such as woman or gender), its complexity and interaction with other subjects (diversity and intersectionality), and gender mainstreaming. Raewyn Connell's account of gender provided the main theoretical perspective underpinning my analysis (Connell, 1991, 2002). Connell envisages gender as a multi-level set of relationships structuring social relations. This 'gender order' is analytically divided into four dimensions: power, production (the gender division of labour), emotional and

symbolic. Connell illustrates the ways in which these levels of gender are interlinked spanning micro and macro analysis, agent and structure. Reproduction and change are understood as occurring through practice. Connell also utilises Gramsci's concept of hegemony to examine the way in which dominant groups can form and reinforce their social position. This describes the way ideology can act as a medium for the operation of meaning, and also relates to the Foucauldian notion of the 'episteme' setting the boundaries for knowledge. This helps to understand how particular ways of thinking about gender become invisible due to their hegemonic position, and thus how difficult it is to alter the power relations which stem from them.

In relation to the subject of the working, I showed that the shift from woman to gender has not necessarily been accompanied by a more complex understanding of the issues at hand. Although similar elements of equality were present through time, the emphasis placed on these differed. I found a greater shift towards seeing equality of (measureable) outcome as important, and an understanding that equal treatment does not equate to identical treatment. In relation to diversity and intersectionality, there was again considerable variation between the three sites, as well as examples where the councils' attention to these concepts did not necessarily show progression. Notably, when considering the concept of mainstreaming, I found evidence to suggest that the municipal feminist initiatives prefigured some elements of this in their working. This again challenges the idea of necessarily linear progression from theory to practice and through time. In the contemporary working the elements of mainstreaming emphasised were different, with a particular stress on monitoring and data collection. I discussed the implications of this for the type of work which can be envisaged and carried out, showing the way in which concepts and their related terminology can shape work being enacted. My examination of these areas within each of the councils over time, and between the different sites, allowed me to show the complex and multivalent ways in which change has and has not taken place within local government gender equality working. I highlighted the, at times, unexpected and non-linear ways in which concepts and the related terminology can be stretched or shrunk. I argued for the centrality of the individual equalities workers in shaping these processes and the related policies and outcomes. The knowledge and understanding of the issues to be addressed by different workers impacted significantly on the interpretation and enactment of work on gender equality in each council. On the one hand this points towards an inherent instability in

local government gender equality working — based on the maintenance of staff. On the other hand, the possibility for change and enrichment of the status quo is also present. More broadly, my work attests to the value of looking at the understandings of individuals, as well as their practices, and the related policy texts and theories. Taking this multifaceted approach has enabled me to give a fuller account of the processes of change and development within a single site looking at gender equality.

I addressed my third research question in chapter seven, which asked what the significance of legislation has been in driving and shaping gender equality working. I considered the role of legislation in the development of gender equality work in local government, and how this has changed since the creation of the first women's initiatives. Considering the working of my three case study sites over time, I found that national legislation was much more clearly a preoccupation of the contemporary working than of the municipal feminist. Using my data I showed that developments in national legislation have been significant in shaping and standardising the work that takes place in this area over the period under study. This is particularly the case when considering the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty, as they were clearly shown in the data gathered in relation to the councils' contemporary working. However, examining both interviews and official documents, and comparing the three sites also revealed significant variation, and the space for interpretation that exists around the legislation. The Gender Equality Duty appeared to have worked to significantly standardise what takes place, and to create a baseline. I highlighted again the role played by individual workers and their knowledge in interpreting and enacting any national legislative or policy change. Although the 2010 Equality Act was very new at the point at which I collected my data, it was also fruitful to consider the reflections of the workers on this, and the issues raised. I discussed some of its limitations and the need for consideration and guidance in its implementation, if it is to build a full understanding of gender equality and intersectionality. The legislation provides a framing of the subject of gender and other equalities working which has implications for how this is understood and acted upon. Although the unification and simplification of the legislation relating to different equalities strands was felt to be positive by the contemporary workers, it was unclear how it supports the prioritisation of different work streams, and indeed how multiple discrimination or intersectionality can be addressed. My findings broadly supported the significance of recent legislation in

shaping gender equality working in local government through standardising several elements of this. However, it is clear from the differences between the three sites I studied that on top of this there remains considerable scope for interpretation and variation. Legislation can be a constructive tool in the development of gender equality that has the potential to be built upon in specific contexts, yet it is not sufficient for a full and intersectional approach to gender equality in local government.

Following from my discussion in chapter three of work considering the movement of feminists into other organisations and campaigns, I presented local government as a particularly interesting site to examine in relation to the WLM and feminism more broadly. This is due to the way it encompasses an array of the key questions about the relationship and boundaries between the feminist movement and the state, how organising for social change should take place, and professional working. My fourth research question considered how municipal feminist and contemporary gender equality workers relate to social movements, which I addressed in chapter eight. I focused on the local government gender equality workers as individuals, and sought to position them in relation to the feminist movement, feminism, and theorising about those working within formal, though not political or activist, channels to further gender equality. In doing so I used my data to argue that many of the workers both consider themselves to be feminists, and that this has significance for their work within the councils. I considered the views of the equality workers in relation to the ideas and activities of the WLM and feminism more broadly. In doing so I argued that the workers with feminist views do not represent an institutionalised version of the WLM, and are not fully described by the concept of the femocrat. Instead I highlighted the elements of their opinions and practice that both make them distinctive, and draw them closer to the WLM. In doing so I posited that their focus on making practical change, their challenge position within their council setting, and their feminist knowledge of gender equality combine to position them as professional feminists. This idea cuts across the established delineations of what type of work, organised how, located where and carried out by whom, is considered to be part of the feminist movement. This has implications for how we understand and evaluate feminist working. By tracing feminist ideas and organising from the WLM, through municipal feminism, to contemporary council workers, my work suggests a loosening of some of the usual ways in which feminist working has

been characterised and evaluated. In the context of ongoing feminist history, theory and working this provides an encouragement to counter the ossification of categories.

### *Future Directions for Research*

As much as my research has allowed me to present particular accounts of feminism, gender equality and local government, it is by no means definitive. As well as the possibilities for approaching the topic using different methodologies, there are also several areas of work that would be particularly fruitful to explore in future. These stem both from the things put aside due to the necessary narrowing of focus a doctoral thesis requires, and from questions raised in the process of carrying out this research. Firstly, there is great scope to investigate the history and present position of local government working on other areas of equality, particularly on race and ethnicity, and to connect them. There is a longer history of legislation and council initiatives in relation to race and race relations that has not been fully explored. In particular, studying the relationship between the different equalities initiatives would not only add to the extant history of this area, but could add significantly to our understanding of how concepts such as diversity and intersectionality have developed and could be fully realised in future.

A second area to attend to further is the exploration of the relationship between professionalism and feminism. This has several elements. Firstly there is scope for a historical examination of the WLM, and indeed earlier iterations of the feminist movement, particularly focusing on professional working and workers. Included within this could also be professional feminist working outside of the state and charitable sector — i.e. commercial businesses and enterprise. As I discussed in chapters two and three, there is only a scattering of work in this area and it is worthy of fuller attention. It is also interesting to consider in light of the resistance to the idea of professional or commercial business feminists. This was illustrated during discussions about who to include in the Sisterhood and After oral history archive, with some advisory board

members adamant that such people did not exist in relation to the WLM.<sup>13</sup> Whether this is the case or not, it would bear investigation.

The ongoing interpretation and implementation of the Equality Act (and indeed further legislative changes) is another area that would benefit from further academic scrutiny. It will be important not only to evaluate more fully the details of its implications, impact and outcomes, but also potentially to defend the continued existence of such legislation and duties upon public bodies given the political hostility towards it there has been since 2010. This is not to suggest taking an uncritical position in relation to national legislation or local policy and practice, but to stress the importance of academic research in this area adding to the conversation going on around it in different spheres of political and social life.

### *Feminism and Local Government*

As the recent campaigning work of the Fawcett Society has highlighted, with its responsibility for approximately a quarter of public spending — local government matters to people's lives and is a significant arena for gender equality working. This thesis has shown how this takes place today, as well as in the past. It has also explicitly drawn out the connections between this local government working, and feminism, particularly of the Women's Liberation Movement. Through looking at the policies, practices and individuals involved in local government gender equality working I have shone a light on an area linked to both mainstream and feminist politics, but that is not reducible to either. Although undoubtedly bounded by multiple factors, there remains scope for the bending and stretching of this equality working. As I have shown over the past three decades, positive developments have grown alongside the shrinking of others: this is far from a fixed space. Although political lobbying on a national and local level are obviously part of the canon of activist activity, engagement with those employed rather than elected by the state, who plan, organise and enact equalities work is also valuable. I have argued for a more considered acknowledgement of the significance of local government workers in the history, theory and practice of feminism. It is these people who have to understand and communicate legislation and ideas into practical

---

<sup>13</sup> Having said this, Ursula Owen, a publisher, and Barbara Jones, a tradeswoman, were included in the archive and represent these strands within the WLM.

work in particular local areas, simultaneously in touch with those inside and outside of the state. Although not directly subject to the regular revision of elections, they deserve attention as a significant element within the constellation of actors shaping the gender equality landscape in the UK.

Revisiting and examining the legacy of the WLM and municipal feminism is pertinent to several projects. On one level, documenting and discussing the WLM and municipal feminism makes a contribution to the earlier feminist project of revealing what can be ‘hidden from history’. This was brought home to me strongly in the process of attempting to find and use materials created by the municipal feminist initiatives. The patchy existence and accessibility of such sources speaks of the need to attend to them. On another level, from the perspective of both academia and activism, looking at the ideas and working of the WLM and municipal feminism can contribute to growth and development. As this thesis has shown, there are many repetitions and variations to be found in discourses around gender equality through time — engaging with these and this process can work against tendencies to reinvent the wheel. There are also evidently issues that continue to go unresolved, including questions around intersectionality. Considering this history specifically in relation to current debates and developments in gender equality legislation, and local government working, means we can ask questions about how interventions are working, what their implications are, and what can be made of them.

## Works Cited

- Acker, J. 1995. Feminist Goals and Organizing Processes. In *Feminist Organisations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, FERREE, M. M. & MARTIN, P. Y. (Eds.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Adams, M. L. 1989. There's No Place Like Home: On the Place of Identity in Feminist Politics. *Feminist Review*, 31: 22-33.
- Ahmed, S. & Swan, E. 2006. Doing Diversity Work. *Policy Futures in Education*, 4.
- Allan, E. J. 2008. *Policy Discourses, Gender and Education*. London: Routledge.
- Arendt, H. 2005. *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, Totalitarianism*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Arnold, G. 1995. Dilemmas of Feminist Coalitions: Collective Identity and Strategic Effectiveness in the Battered Women's Movement In *Feminist Organisations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, FERREE, M. M. & MARTIN, P. Y. (Eds.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Bagilhole, B. 1994. A tale of two counties' implementation of equal opportunities and race relations policies. *Local Government Policy Making*, 21: 41-48.
- Baily, J. 2012 What happens when men get involved in feminism? Contemporary mixed-gender feminist activism in England. Sheffield, University of Sheffield.
- Ball, W. & Solomos, J. (Eds.) (1990) *Race and local politics*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Education.
- Banyard, K. 2010. *The Equality Illusion*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Bashevkin, S. 2006. *Tales of Two Cities: Women and Municipal Restructuring in London and Toronto*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Bernard, H. R. 2006. *Research Methods in Anthropology*. Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Blau, P. M. 1956. *Bureaucracy in Modern Society*. New York: Random House.
- Bouchier, D. 1983. *The Feminist Challenge*. London: Macmillan.
- Braidotti, R. 2002a. *Metamorphoses: Towards a materialist theory of becoming*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Braidotti, R. 2002b. The Uses and Abuses of the Sex/Gender Distinction in European Feminist Practices. In *Thinking Differently*, GRIFFIN, G. & BRAIDOTTI, R. (Eds.). London: Zed Books.
- Branney, P. 2012. What is the UK Gender Duty and why is it linked to men's health? *Critical Public Health*, 22: 121-126.
- Breines, W. 1989. *Community and Organisation in the New Left: The Great Refusal*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Breitenbach, E. 1990. 'Sisters Are Doing it for Themselves' the Women's Movement in Scotland In *The Scottish Government Yearbook*, BROWN, A. & PARRY, R. (Eds.). Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.
- Brown, W. 2003. Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy. *Theory and Event*, 7.
- Brownill, S. & Halford, S. 1990. Understanding Women's involvement in local politics: How useful is a formal/informal dichotomy? *Political Geography Quarterly*, 9: 396-414.
- Bruegel, I. & Kean, H. 1995. The moment of municipal feminism: gender and class in 1980s local government. *Critical Social Policy*, 15: 147-169.
- Buckingham, A. & Saunders, P. 2004. *The Survey Methods Workbook*. Cambridge: Polity Press.



- Budgeon, S. 2011. *Third Wave Feminism and the Politics of Gender in Late Modernity* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Busby, N. & Macleod, C. 2002. Maintaining a Balance: The Retention of Women MPs in Scotland. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55: 30-42.
- Button, S. 1984. Women's Committees: A study of gender and local government policy making. *SAUS Working Paper*, 45.
- Caine, B. 1997. *English Feminism: 1780-1980*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carline, A. 2011. Criminal justice, extreme pornography and prostitution: Protecting women or promoting morality? *Sexualities*, 14: 312-333.
- Carline, A. 2012. Of Frames, Cons and Affects: Constructing and Responding to Prostitution and Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 20: 207-225.
- Cerwonka, A. & Malkki, L. H. 2007. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chappell, L. 2002. The 'Femocrat' Strategy: Expanding the repertoire of Feminist Activists. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55: 85-98.
- Chappell, L. 2010. Comparative Gender and Institutions: Directions for Research. *Perspectives of Politics*, 8: 183-189.
- Charles, N. 2004. Feminist Politics and Devolution: A Preliminary Analysis. *Social Politics*, 11: 297-311.
- Childs, S. 2002. Hitting the target: Are Labour women MPs 'acting for' women? *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55: 143-153.
- Clucas, R. 2012. Religion, Sexual Orientation and the Equality Act 2010: Gay Bishops in the Church of England Negotiating Rights Against Discrimination. *Sociology*, 46: 936-950.
- Cockburn, C. 1977. *The Local State*. London: Pluto Press.
- Cockburn, C. 2012. Interviewed by Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project*, 2010-2013. British Library Sound & Moving Image Catalogue reference C1420/42, transcript p 109/track 5 © University of Sussex and The British Library.
- Collective, W. 2007. Gender Transformations in Higher Education. *Sociological Research Online*, 12.
- Conley, H. & Page, M. 2010. The Gender Equality Duty in Local Government: The Prospects for Integration. *Industrial Law Journal*, 39: 321-325.
- Connell, R. 2005. Advancing Gender Reform in Large-Scale Organisations: A New Approach for Practitioners and Researchers. *Policy and Society*, 24: 5-24.
- Connell, R. W. 1991. *Gender and Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, R. W. 2002. *Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Coote, A. & Campbell, B. 1982. *Sweet Freedom*. London: Picador.
- Coote, A. & Pattullo, P. 1990. *Power and Prejudice: Women and Politics*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Cowman, K. & Jackson, L. A. 2005. Middle-Class Women and Professional Identity. *Women's History Review*, 14: 165-180.
- Coyle, A. 1989. The Limits of Change: Local government and equal opportunities for women. *Public Administration*, 67: 39-50.
- Crenshaw, K. 1989. Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Anti-Discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Anti-racist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139: 139-168.
- Dean, J. 2009. Who's afraid of third wave feminism?: On the uses of the 'third wave' in British

- feminist politics. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11: 334-352.
- Dean, J. 2010. *Rethinking Contemporary Feminist Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dickens, L. 1997. Public Sector Competitive Tendering: The Missing Equality Dimension. *Industrial Law Journal*, 26: 177-181.
- Dobrowolsky, A. 2002. Crossing Boundaries: Exploring and Mapping Women's Constitutional Interventions in England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. *Social Politics*, 9: 293-340.
- Donnelly, E. 1985. Sex equality legislation: Its implications for local government. *Local Government Studies*, 11: 67-76.
- Duerst-Lahti, G. 1989. The Government's Role in Building the Women's Movement. *Political Science Quarterly*, 104: 249-268.
- Edwards, J. 1988. Local Government Women's Committees. *Local Government Studies*, 14: 39-52.
- Edwards, J. 1989. Women's Committees: A model for good local government? *Policy and Politics*, 17: 221-225.
- Edwards, J. 1995. The Feminist Case for Local Self-government. *Local Government Studies*, 21: 82-98.
- Eisenstein, H. 1995. The Australian Femocratic Experiment: A Feminist Case for Bureaucracy. In *Feminist Organisations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, FERREE, M. M. & MARTIN, P. Y. (Eds.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Eisenstein, H. 1996. *Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ely, R. J. & Meyerson, D. E. 2000. Advancing gender equity in organizations: the challenge and importance of maintaining a gender narrative. *Organization*, 7: 589-608.
- Everingham, C., Stevenson, D. & Warner-Smith, P. 2007. 'Things are Getting Better all the Time'? Challenging the Narrative of Women's Progress from a Generational Perspective. *Sociology*, 41: 419-437.
- Exworthy, M. & Halford, S. 1999. Professionals and managers in a changing public sector: conflict compromise and collaboration? . In *Professionals and the New Managerialism in the Public Sector*, EXWORTHY, M. & HALFORD, S. (Eds.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Ferguson, K. 1984. *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Ferree, M. M. 2011. The Discursive Politics of Feminist Intersectionality In *Framing Intersectionality. Debates on a Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*, LUTZ, H., VIVAR, M. T. H. & SUPIK, L. (Eds.). Farnham: Ashgate.
- Ferree, M. M. & Martin, P. Y. 1995. Doing the Work of the Movement: Feminist Organisations. In *Feminist Organisations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, FERREE, M. M. & MARTIN, P. Y. (Eds.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Forbes, I. 1989. Unequal Partners: The Implementation of Equal Opportunities in Western Europe. *Public Administration*, 67: 19-38.
- Foucault, M. 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Franzway, S., Court, D. & Connell, R. W. 1989. *Staking a Claim: Feminism, bureaucracy and the state*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fraser, N. 1995. From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age. *New Left Review*, 212: 68-93.

- Fraser, N. 1997. *Justice Interruptus*. London: Routledge.
- Fraser, N. 2008. *Scales of Justice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fraser, N. 2013. *Fortunes of Feminism*. London: Verso.
- Fredman, S. 2011. The Public Sector Equality Duty. *Industrial Law Journal*, 40: 405-427.
- Freeman, J. 1970 The Tyranny of Structurelessness, 12.11.10,  
<http://www.uic.edu/orgs/cwluherstory/jofreeman/joreen/tyranny.htm>
- Freeman, J. 1975. *The Politics of Women's Liberation*. New York: David McKay.
- Friedson, E. 1994. *Professionalism Re-Born: Theory, Prophecy and Policy*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Geertz, C. 2000. *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gelb, J. 1986. Feminism in Britain: politics without power? In *The New Women's Movement*, DAHLERUP, D. (Ed.). London: Sage.
- George, A. L. & Bennett, A. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Gill, R. 2007. *Gender and the media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goss, S. 1984. Women's Initiatives in Local Government In *Local Socialism? Labour Councils and New Left Alternatives*, BODDY, M. & FUDGE, C. (Eds.). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Green, S. F. 1997. *Urban Amazons*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Haan, F. D., Allen, M., Purvis, J. & Daskalova, K. (Eds.) (2013) *Women's Activism Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present* Oxford: Routledge.
- Halford, S. 1990 Local Politics, Feminism and the Local State: Women's Initiatives in British Local Government in the 1980s. *Graduate School of Arts and Social Studies*. Falmer, University of Sussex.
- Halford, S. 1991. Positive policies for women in British local government: the national picture. In *Equal Opportunity Developments for Women in Local Government: an Anglo-German perspective*, POVALL, M. & LANKAU-HERRMANN, M. (Eds.). London: Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society.
- Halford, S. 1992. Feminist change in a patriarchal organisation: the experience of women's initiatives in local government and implications for feminist perspectives on state institutions. In *Gender and Bureaucracy*, SAVAGE, M. & WITZ, A. (Eds.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Halford, S. & Leonard, P. 2001. *Gender, Power and Organisations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Halford, S. & Leonard, P. 2006. *Negotiating Gendered Identities at Work: Place, Space and Time*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Halford, S. & Savage, M. 1995. The bureaucratic career: demise of adaptation? . In *Social Change and the Middle Classes*, BUTLER, T. & SAVAGE, M. (Eds.). London: UCL Press.
- Halford, S., Savage, M. & Witz, A. 1997. *Gender, Careers and Organisations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Hand, J., Davis, B. & Feast, P. 2012. Unification, simplification, amplification? An analysis of aspects of the British Equality Act 2010. *Commonwealth Law Bulletin*, 38: 509-528.
- Harriss, K. 1989. New Alliances: Socialist-Feminism in the Eighties. *Feminist Review*, 31: 34-54.
- Hearn, K. 2012. Interviewed by Rachel Cohen, *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project*, 2010-2013. British Library Sound & Moving

- Image Catalogue reference C1420/44, transcript p59/track 2 © University of Sussex and The British Library.
- Helmke, G. & Levitsky, S. 2004. Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2: 725-740.
- Hill, M. R. 1993. *Archival Strategies and Techniques* Newbury Park: Sage.
- Hinings, B. 1983. Developments in organisation and management. *Local Government Studies*, 9: 34-38.
- Hodges, B. D., Kuper, A. & Reeves, S. 2008. Discourse analysis. *BMJ*, 337: 570-572.
- Hoeber, L. 2007. Exploring the Gaps between Meanings and Practices of Equity in a Sport Organization. *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 14: 259-280.
- Howard, M. & Tibballs, S. 2003. *Talking Equality: What Men and Women Think About Equality in Britain Today*. London: The Future Foundation.
- Howarth, D. 2000. *Discourse*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hubbard, P. & Colosi, R. 2013. Sex, Crime and the City: Municipal Law and the Regulation of Sexual Entertainment. *Social & Legal Studies*, 22: 67-86.
- Hutt, J. 2012. Interviewed by Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project*, 2010-2013. British Library Sound & Moving Image Catalogue reference C1420/21, transcript p41/track 2 © University of Sussex and The British Library.
- Johnson, R. 2011. Interviewed by Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project*, 2010-2013. British Library Sound & Moving Image Catalogue reference C1420/34, transcript p240/track 10 © University of Sussex and The British Library.
- Jowett, M. 2004. "I Don't See Feminists As You See Feminists": Young Women Negotiating Feminism in Contemporary Britain. In *All about the Girl: Culture, Power, and Identity*, HARRIS, A. (Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Kantola, J. 2006. *Feminists Theorize the State*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Katzenstein, M. F. 1998. *Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest Inside the Church and Military*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kean, H. 1994. Searching for the past in the present defeat: the construction of historical and political identity in British feminism in the 1920s. *Women's History Review*, 3: 57-80.
- Keller, J. M. 2012. Virtual Feminisms. *Information, Communication and Society*, 15: 429-447.
- Kenny, M. 2007. Gender, Institutions and Power: A Critical Review. *Politics*, 27: 91-100.
- Kettle, J. 1998. Local initiatives for working women: Feminism, economics, or both? *Local Government Studies*, 24: 64-76.
- Kingdon, J. W. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Lambert, C. & Parker, A. 2006. Imagination, Hope and the Positive Face of Feminism: Pro/Feminist Pedagogy in 'Post' Feminist Times? *Studies in Higher Education*, 31: 199-227.
- Leach, R. & Barnett, N. 1997. The new public management and the local government review. *Local Government Studies*, 23: 39-55.
- Leach, S. & Davis, H. 1990. Impact of the abolition of the metropolitan county councils. *Local Government Studies*, 16: 1-11.
- Leach, S. & Lowndes, V. 2007. Of Roles and Rules: Analysing the Changing Relationship between Political Leaders and Chief Executives in Local Government *Public Policy and Administration*, 22: 183-200.

- Lewis, K., Hammond, J. & Horvers, K. 2012. In challenging times, might the Equality Act 2010 assist universities in embracing and embedding widening participation? *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 16: 19-22.
- Lieberman, S. 1989. Women's Committees in Scotland. In *The Scottish Government Yearbook*, BROWN, A. & MCCRONE, D. (Eds.). Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.
- Lockwood, G., Henderson, C. & Thornicroft, G. 2012. The Equality Act 2010 and mental health. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 200: 182-183.
- Lombardo, E. & Meier, P. 2009. Stretching, bending and inconsistency in policy frames on gender equality. In *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality*, LOMBARDO, E., MEIER, P. & VERLOO, M. (Eds.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Lombardo, E., Meier, P. & Verloo, M. 2009. Conclusions: A critical understanding of the discursive politics of gender equality. In *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality*, LOMBARDO, E., MEIER, P. & VERLOO, M. (Eds.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Long, J. M. 2011 OBJECT! The Re-Emergence of Feminist Anti-Pornography Activism in the UK. London, London Southbank University.
- Lovenduski, J. 1989. Implementing Equal Opportunities in the 1980s: An Overview. *Public Administration*, 67: 7-18.
- Lovenduski, J. & Randall, V. 1993. *Contemporary Feminist Politics: Women and Power in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lowndes, V. 1996. Varieties of New Institutionalism: A Critical Appraisal. *Public Administration*, 74: 181-197.
- Lutz, H., Vivar, M. T. H. & Supik, L. 2011. Framing Intersectionality: An Introduction In *Framing Intersectionality. Debates on a Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*, LUTZ, H., VIVAR, M. T. H. & SUPIK, L. (Eds.). Farnham: Ashgate.
- Mackay, F. 2008. The state of women's movement/s in Britain: ambiguity, complexity and challenges from the periphery. In *Women's Movements: Flourishing or in abeyance?*, GREY, S. & SAWER, M. (Eds.). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mackay, F. 2011. Conclusion: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism? In *Gender, Politics and Institutions*, KROOK, M. L. & MACKAY, F. (Eds.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mackay, F. & Meier, P. 2003 Institutions, Change and Gender-Relations: Towards a Feminist New Institutionalism? *European Consortium of Political Research*. Edinburgh.
- March, J. G. & Olsen, J. P. 1984. The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life. *American Political Science Review*, 78: 734-749.
- Martlew, C., Forrester, C. & Buchanan, G. 1985. Activism and Office: Women and Local Government in Scotland. *Local Government Studies*, 11: 47-65.
- Mazur, A. & Stetson, D. M. 1995. Conclusion: The Case for State Feminism. In *Comparative State Feminism*, MAZUR, A. & STETSON, D. M. (Eds.). London: Sage.
- Mcbride, D. E. & Mazur, A. G. 2010. *The Politics of State Feminism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Mccall, L. 2005. The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs*, 30: 1771-1800.
- Mccarthy, J. D. & Wolfson, M. 1992. Consensus Movements, Conflict Movements, and the Cooptation of Civic and State Infrastructures. In *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* MORRIS, A. D. & MUELLER, C. M. (Eds.). New Haven: Yale University Press.

- McKenley, J. 2011. Interviewed by Margaretta Jolly, *Sisterhood and After: The Women's Liberation Oral History Project*, 2010-2013. British Library Sound & Moving Image Catalogue reference C1420/15, transcript p74/track 2 © University of Sussex and The British Library.
- Mclaughlin, E. 2007. From Negative to Positive Equality Duties: The Development and Constitutionalisation of Equality Provisions in the UK. *Social Policy and Society*, 6: 111-121.
- Mcrobbie, A. 2004a. Notes on Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime. In *All about the Girl: Culture, Power and Identity*, HARRIS, A. (Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Mcrobbie, A. 2004b. Post-feminism and Popular Culture. *Feminist Media Studies*, 4: 255-264.
- Mcrobbie, A. 2009. *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. London: Sage.
- Melucci, A. 1982. *L'Invenzione del Presente. Movimenti, Identita, Bisogni Individuali*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Melucci, A. 1989. *Nomads of the Present*. London: Hutchinson Radius.
- Melucci, A. 1996. *Challenging Codes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meyerson, D. E. & Scully, M. A. 2003. Tempered Radicalism: Changing the Workplace from Within. In *Reader in Gender, Work, and Organization*, ELY, R. J., FOLDY, E. G. & SCULLY, M. A. (Eds.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Michels, R. 1959. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. New York: Dover Publications.
- Monro, S. 2006. Evaluating Local Government Equalities Work: The Case of Sexualities Initiatives in the UK. *Local Government Studies*, 32: 19-39.
- Moran, C. 2011. *How to Be a Woman*. London: Ebury Press.
- Mueller, C. 2003. "Recognition struggles" and process theories of social movements In *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements*, HOBSON, B. (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mueller, C. M. 1992. Building Social Movement Theory. In *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* MORRIS, A. D. & MUELLER, C. M. (Eds.). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Munro, S. 2006. Evaluating Local Government Equalities Work: The Case of Sexualities Initiatives in the UK. *Local Government Studies*, 32: 19-39.
- Nanton, P. 1984. Strategy and Tactics in Organisational Change - Race Relations and Local Government. *Local Government Studies*, 10: 51-60.
- Newman, J. 2000. Beyond the New Public Management? Modernizing Public Services. In *New Managerialism, New Welfare?*, CLARKE, J., GEWIRTZ, S. & MCLAUGHLIN, E. (Eds.). London: Sage.
- O'brien, N. 2013. Positive about Equality: The Public Sector Duty under Threat. *The Political Quarterly*, 84: 486-496.
- Page, M. 2003. Leadership and collaboration challenges in not for profit partnerships. *Organizational and Social Dynamics*, 3: 2007-225.
- Page, M. 2009. Silences and disappearing acts: the politics of gendering organizational practice. In *Critical Management Studies at Work; Negotiating Tensions Between Theory and Practice*, COX, J. W., JONES, T. G. L., VORONOV, M. & WEIR, D. (Eds.). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Page, M. 2011. Gender Mainstreaming - Hidden Leadership? *Gender, Work and Organisation*: 1-19.

- Parker, I. 1992. *Discourse Dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology* London: Routledge.
- Perriton, L. 2007. Forgotten Feminists: the Federation of British Professional and Business Women, 1933-1969. *Women's History Review*, 16: 79-97.
- Perrow, C. 2002. *Organizing America: Wealth, Power and the Origins of American Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Peters, B. G. 1999. *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The 'New Institutionalism'*. London: Pinter.
- Phillips, A. 2004. Defending Equality of Outcome. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 12: 1-19.
- Porta, D. D. & Diani, M. 1999. *Social Movements: An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Predelli, L. N., Perren, K., Halsaa, B., Thun, C. & Manful, E. 2008. Women's Movements: Constructions of Sisterhood, Dispute and Resonance. The Case of the United Kingdom. *Femcit Working Paper*, 2.
- Prior, D. 1993. In search of the new public management. *Local Government Studies*, 19: 447-460.
- Pugh, M. 2000. *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914-1999*. London: Macmillan.
- Randall, V. 1998. Gender and power: women engage the state. In *Gender, Politics and the State*, RANDALL, V. & WAYLEN, G. (Eds.). London: Routledge.
- Redfern, C. & Aune, K. 2010. *Reclaiming the F-Word*. London: Zed Books.
- Rees, J. 2010. A Look Back at Anger: the Women's Liberation Movement in 1978. *Women's History Review*, 19: 337-356.
- Rees, T. 1999. Mainstreaming Equality. In *Engendering Social Policy*, WATSON, S. & DOYLE, L. (Eds.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Rees, T. 2002. The Politics of 'Mainstreaming' Gender Equality. In *The Changing Politics of Gender Equality in Britain*, BREITENBACH, E., BROWN, A., MACKAY, F. & WEBB, J. (Eds.). Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Remington, J. 1991. *The Need to Thrive: Women's Organisations in the Twin Cities*. St Paul: Minnesota Women's Press.
- Richardson, D. & Monro, S. 2013. Public duty and private prejudice: sexualities equalities and local government *Sociological Review*, 61: 131-152.
- Riley, K. 1990. Equality for women - The role of local Authorities. *Local Government Studies*, 16: 49-68.
- Rose, N. 1992. Governing the enterprising self. In *The values of the enterprise culture: the moral debate*, MORRIS, P. & HEELAS, P. (Eds.). London: Routledge.
- Rowbotham, S. 1979. The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism. In *Beyond the Fragments*, ROWBOTHAM, S., SEGAL, L. & ROWBOTHAM, H. (Eds.). London: Merlin Press.
- Rowbotham, S. 1996. Introduction: Mapping the Women's Movement. In *Mapping the Women's Movement*, THRELFALL, M. (Ed.). London: Verso.
- Rupp, L. J. & Taylor, V. 1999. Forging Feminist Identity in an International Movement: A Collective Identity Approach. *Signs*, 24: 363-386.
- Saggar, S. 1991. The Changing Agenda of Race Issues In Local Government: the Case of a London Borough. *Political Studies*, 39: 100-121.
- Sanderson, I. 1998. Beyond performance measurement? Assessing 'value' in local government. *Local Government Studies*, 24: 1-25.
- Saunders, C. 2009. Organisational Size and Democratic Practices: Can Large Be Beautiful? In *Democracy in Social Movements*, PORTA, D. D. (Ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Scharff, C. M. 2012. *Repudiating Feminism*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Schuster, J. 2013. Invisible feminists? Social media and young women's political participation. *Political Science*, 65: 8-24.
- Sebestyen, A. (Ed.) (1988) '68, '78, '88: *From Women's Liberation to Feminism*, Dorset: Prism.
- Segal, L. 1979. A Local Experience. In *Beyond the Fragments*, ROWBOTHAM, S., SEGAL, L. & ROWBOTHAM, H. (Eds.). London: Merlin Press.
- Setch, E. G. 2000 *The Women's Liberation Movement in Britain, 1969-79: Organisation, Creativity and Debate*. London, University of London Royal Holloway.
- Singleton, V. & Michael, M. 1993. Actor-networks and Ambivalence: General Practitioners in the UK Cervical Screening Programme. *Social Studies of Science*, 23: 227-264.
- Society, F. 2013 Red Tape, Red Line: five reasons why government should not 'drop its duty' to tackle women's inequality, 1.6.14, <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Red-Tape-Red-Lines-five-reasons-why-government-should-not-drop-its-duty-to-tackle-womens-inequality.pdf>
- Spence, J. 2010. Collecting Women's Lives: the challenge of feminism in UK youth work in the 1970s and 80s. *Women's History Review*, 19: 159-176.
- Squires, J. 2009. Intersecting Inequalities. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11: 496-512.
- Stokes, W. 1996 "Not An Encounter Group": Democracy and Women's Committees. London, London Guildhall University.
- Stokes, W. 1998. Feminist democracy: The case for women's committees. *Contemporary Politics*, 4: 23-37.
- Swann, E. & Fox, S. 2010. Playing the Game: Strategies of Resistance and Co-optation in Diversity Work. *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 17: 567-589.
- Taylor, V. 1995. Watching for Vibes: Bringing Emotions into the Study of Feminist Organizations. In *Feminist Organisations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, FERREE, M. M. & MARTIN, P. Y. (Eds.). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Thelen, K. 2003. How Institutions Evolve: Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis. In *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, MAHONEY, J. & RUESCHEMEYER, D. (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thelen, K. 2004. *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, H. & Krishnarayan, V. 1994. Race equality in town planning and the local authority context. *Local Government Policy Making*, 21: 45-50.
- Thomlinson, N. 2013 *Race and ethnicity in the English women's movement after 1968*. Cambridge, University of Cambridge.
- Thorsen, D. E. & Lie, A. 2006 What is Neoliberalism?, 10.12.13, <http://folk.uio.no/daget/neoliberalism.pdf>
- Threlfall, M. 1996. Conclusion. In *Mapping the Women's Movement*, THRELFALL, M. (Ed.). London: Verso.
- Tolbert, P. S. & Zucker, L. G. 1996. The institutionalization of institutional theory. In *Handbook of organization studies*, CLEGG, S., HARDY, C. & NORD, W. (Eds.). London: Sage.
- Travers, T. 1990. London After Abolition. *Local Government Studies*, 16: 105-116.



- Vennesson, P. 2008. Case studies and process tracing: theories and practices. In *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, PORTA, D. D. & KEATING, M. (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wainwright, H. 1979a. Introduction. In *Beyond the Fragments*, ROWBOTHAM, S., SEGAL, L. & ROWBOTHAM, H. (Eds.). London: Merlin Press.
- Wainwright, H. 1979b. Moving Beyond the Fragments. In *Beyond the Fragments*, ROWBOTHAM, S., SEGAL, L. & ROWBOTHAM, H. (Eds.). London: Merlin Press.
- Walkerdine, V. 2003. Reclassifying Upward Mobility: femininity and the neoliberal subject. *Gender and Education*, 15: 217-248.
- Walter, N. 2010. *Living Dolls*. London: Virago.
- Wandor, M. (Ed.) (1990) *Once a Feminist: Stories of a Generation*, London: Virago.
- Watson, S. 1992. Femocratic feminisms. In *Gender and Bureaucracy*, SAVAGE, M. & WITZ, A. (Eds.). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Webster, B. 1985. A women's issue: The impact of local authority cuts. *Local Government Studies*, 11: 19-46.
- Welsh, E. & Halcli, A. 2003. Accounts of Feminism Among Women Local Councillors in England. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 26: 345-356.
- Willig, C. 2001. *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Witz, A., Halford, S. & Savage, M. 1996. Organised Bodies: Gender, Sexuality and Embodiment in Contemporary Organisations. In *Sexualising the Social: Power and the Organisation of Sexuality*, ADKINS, L. & MERCHANT, V. (Eds.). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Zald, M. N., Morrill, C. & Rao, H. 2005. The Impact of Social Movements on Organizations: Environment and Responses. In *Social Movements and Organization Theory*, DAVIS, G. F., MCADAM, D., SCOTT, W. R. & ZALD, M. N. (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Appendices

### *Interview Guide — Municipal Feminist Workers*

Themes I am trying to answer questions about:

- Gender equality working in the 1980s
- The relationship between municipal feminism and contemporary equalities
- Organisation and identity in the context of municipal feminism
- The intersection of professional and feminist
- The political views of interviewees at the time they worked in initiatives
- Connection to WLM/feminist movement
- Individual and organisational dimensions

How did you get involved in council women's initiative?

Motivations for this?

Prior work?

Can you tell me about setting up/working for the women's committee?

Who else was involved in this?

Can you remember particular support or opposition from within the council?

Or from people/feminists outside the council?

How did you deal with this/encourage support etc?

Can you remember key things which were important to the agenda?

What was its main aim?

What do you think gender equality means? What does/would it look like?

How was work organised? For example: staffing, structure, situation and relation to other departments, relation to people outside the council, budget, involvement in national networks.

How would you describe what you were doing, your role?

What successes do you feel you had?

Difficulties experienced? How dealt with?

Learning from this period?

Can you tell me if/how legislation was significant for you working?

Were there any important changes you think took place during your time working for the women's initiative?

Reflections on current gender equality working?

How would you have described your political views?

Would you have described yourself as a feminist?

Has this changed?

Do you think these had any significance for your work on the women's initiative? How was this manifest?

Do you think other people involved had similar/different views?

Did you ever think there was conflict between your political or feminist views and the council environment?

Can you tell me about the rest of your career?

Is there anything else at all you'd like to tell me about or add?

*Interview Guide — Contemporary Gender Equality Workers*

Themes I am trying to answer questions about:

- Gender equality working today
- The relationship between municipal feminism and contemporary equalities
- Organisation and identity in the context of council gender equality working
- The intersection of professional and feminist
- The political views of interviewees
- Connection to WLM/feminist movement
- Individual and organisational dimensions

Can you tell me about work on gender equality by the council, whether internal or in terms of service provision?

How is it organised? For example: staffing, structure, situation and relation to other departments, relation to people outside the council, budget, involvement in national networks.

What do you think gender equality means, what does/would it look like?

What do you consider to be most successful part of this working, why?

Have you experienced difficulties with your work? How did/do you deal with this?

Can you recall any particular support or opposition from those within the council? Or those external to it?

How do you deal with this/encourage support etc?

Do you think the council's approach to this type of work has changed while you've been here?

Can you tell me if/how legislation (for example Gender and Public Sector Equality Duties) has been significant for you working?

Impact of and response to cuts?

Can you tell me about how you came to work in this role?

How do you understand your role? What is your work about? What does it mean to you?

Do you think your work has a political dimension?

How would you describe your political views?

I've been interviewing people involved in this sort of work during the 1980s, some of whom thought of themselves as feminists — I wonder if you this is a term you would ever use to describe yourself?

Conflicts between views and council environment?

How do you envisage your career continuing in future?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about or add?

*Participant Information Sheet*

**You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.**

I am a doctoral researcher at the University of Sussex and my work examines the development of equalities working in local government in the UK in conjunction with the history of the women's movement. I am interested in the way in which equalities policies and working practices have developed between the 1970s and the present and the way in which the women's movement and the local state have interacted. I am also particularly interested in the individual experiences of people involved in this sort of work.

My work is funded by the Leverhulme Trust, a large grant giving foundation and has been approved by the Sussex University Social Science Research Ethics Committee. I will be collecting data between August 2011 and June 2012.

You have been chosen to participate as I believe your experiences would be very relevant to my research and a valuable source of information. Of course it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. However, you will still be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide to participate we will arrange a time and suitable quiet location for an interview which I will record using a dictaphone.

I will use the information collected in the development and writing of my PhD thesis, which will in turn contribute to furthering understandings of this area of recent history and contemporary equalities practice. I hope it will also be an interesting opportunity for you to reflect on your own experiences.

If you would like to take part or have any further questions about this project then please contact Freya Johnson Ross, email [f.johnson-ross@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:f.johnson-ross@sussex.ac.uk) or telephone 07411027084. You can also contact my supervisor Dr Margaretta Jolly by email [m.jolly@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:m.jolly@sussex.ac.uk) or telephone 01273 873585.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I look forward to hearing from you.  
Best wishes,

Freya Johnson Ross  
PhD Candidate University of Sussex

*Interview Consent Form***INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM****INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this Agreement is to ensure that I, Freya Johnson Ross am:

- (a) able to use the content of your interview (your "Contribution"); and
- (b) that your Contribution is used in accordance with your wishes.

This Agreement is made between Freya Johnson Ross ("the Researcher"), and you "the Interviewee", named below.

**Interviewee's name:**

**Address:**

**Date of Interview:**

**OPERATIVE TERMS**

1. You, confirm that you have consented to make the Contribution voluntarily and understand that you can chose not to participate, and can withdraw from the project at any stage without being penalised in any way;
2. You acknowledge and agree that (subject to any restrictions stated in paragraph 5 below) your Contribution or any part of it may be edited, copied, added to, adapted or transcribed at the Researchers discretion.
3. You also acknowledge and agree that (subject to any restrictions stated in paragraph 5 below) your Contribution (and any part of it) and any photographs of you made in connection with your Contribution may also be used in the following ways:
  - a. use in universities, colleges and other educational establishments, including use in research;
  - b. public lectures or talks;
  - c. use in all media and forms (whether now existing or to hereafter invented, including without limitation, print, audio or video cassettes, DVD, CD or CD ROM;
  - d. public reference purposes in libraries, museums & record offices;
  - e. use on radio or television;
  - f. publication worldwide on the internet.
4. I understand that I have given my approval for my name and/or the name of my town, and/or the name of my workplace to be used in the final report of the project, and in further publications.
5. The following restrictions (if any are stated) will apply to your contribution;

.....

.....



.....  
 .....

6. You understand that the Researcher will retain your name and contact details for the purpose of the research project and for so long as your Contribution exists.
7. ***By signing this Agreement you consent to the processing of your personal information for the purposes specified above. You understand that such information will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.***

This Agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with English law and the jurisdiction of the English courts.

Both parties shall by signing below indicate acceptance of the Agreement.

By the Interviewee:

**Signed:**

.....

**Name in Block Capitals:**..... **Date:**.....

By the Researcher:

**Signed:**

.....

**Name in Block Capitals:**..... **Date:**.....